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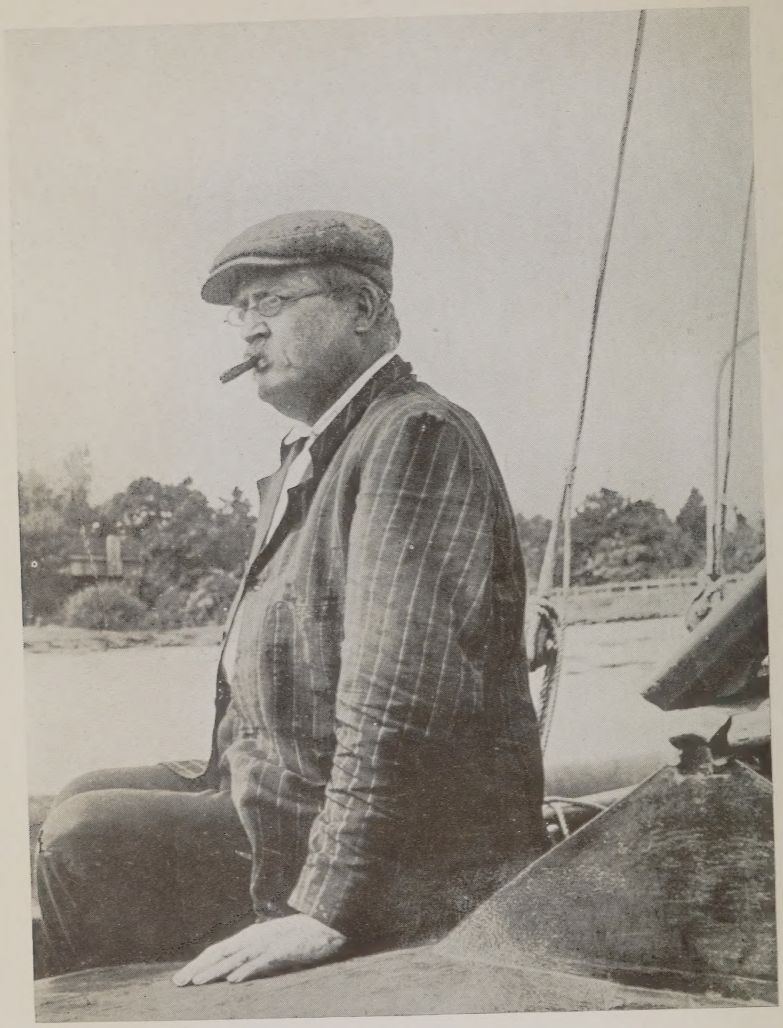

THE AUTHOR
ON BOARD FALCON II, 1915.

REMINISCENCES

The Wanderings of a Yachtsman and War Correspondent

By

E. F. KNIGHT *Author of "The Cruise of the Falcon," "The Falcon on the Baltic," "The Cruise of the Alerte," "Where Three Empires Meet," "Small Boat Sailing," etc.*

55828

With Frontispiece

55828

LONDON: HUTCHINSON & CO.
PATERNOSTER ROW, E.C.

1923

P
400
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REMINISCENCES

CHAPTER I

Early days in Touraine.—The *coup d'État*.—First experience of prison.—The great inundation.—Bath.—Dotheboys Hall.—Peninsular veterans.—Rudge.—The call of the road.—Sothern.—"Towns."—First time under fire.—Exmoor.—The Rev. John Russell.

NOW that my three-score and tenth birthday has been left behind me, and that the infirmities that follow a rough life in bad climates prevent me from continuing my career of travel, campaigning and ocean cruising, and that even my journalistic activities are circumscribed, I have bethought me to write this volume of reminiscences. I was doomed to be a barrister when young, but as I look back over the seventy odd years that I have lived, I realize that I have had a very good innings, that I have seen a great deal of this wide and wonderful world, and that for many reasons I ought to be happy that mine has been the joyous career of a rolling stone rather than that of some home-staying, money-grubbing lawyer.

I was born in early Victorian days when the income tax was only a few pennies in the pound, when all was cheap. The first great International Exhibition under the Crystal Palace in Hyde Park had brought together citizens from every country in the world to fraternize. Mutual trade was to make us all brothers in a universe of peace and plenty. There was to be no more war ; Cobden and the Manchester School were preaching pacificism, non-intervention, economy and Free Trade ; the golden Millenium was coming to the middle classes ; the Temple of Janus was to be shut and locked, and kept so through all the money-making ages. Well there have been dozens of wars since then in every quarter of the world, and now after the greatest of all wars the world is quarrelling more fiercely than ever.

I read the other day of a well-known Bishop who is engaged in writing his autobiography. "How are you getting on with your book," said a friend to him. The

Bishop replied : " I have written nine chapters and I am not born yet." So a truce to politics and let me hasten to my birth.

I was born on the 23rd April, St. George's Day, 1852. My father was a younger son and had sixteen brothers and sisters. We belonged to the Knights of Worcestershire and Shropshire, a family long settled in those parts. In the first Parliament held in England in the reign of Edward I, Shrewsbury was represented by a Knight, and the late Sir Frederick Winn Knight, of Wolverley, was member for West Worcestershire for forty-four years. My father had been in the Army. In 1836, on the Staff of Sir De Lacy Evans, he fought with the Spanish Legion throughout the Carlist War, in which campaign his brother was killed, leading a forlorn hope at the siege of St. Sebastian.

After the war my father seconded and remained on General Espartero's staff. He took a leading part in escorting the infant Queen Isabella through the hostile Republican forces to Madrid. I found that his memory was still living there when I visited Spain later, and obtained privileges as a war correspondent that were denied to any other Englishman. His was an adventurous disposition. Among other things he, with a cousin of his, led an expedition into the Caucasus to help the Circassians who were then defending their country against the conquering Russians.

My father retired from the Army before my birth, and devoted himself to the study of astronomy and mathematics, as did his father before him, a friend of the great Laplace. I have in my possession correspondence between my grandfather and the illustrious Frenchman, in which the former attacked Laplace's theory of capillary attraction, and the latter defended it, but at the same time declared that the young Englishman, Knight, was the only person in Europe who understood his theory.

My first recollections are of sunny Touraine, to which my family moved when I was about two years old. Those were strange days in France. Napoleon's treacherous *coup d'État* had but recently taken place. It was a reign of terror at Tours as elsewhere in France. Spies were everywhere ; one had to be very careful of one's discourse

in the cafés, and even in the privacy of one's own house, where one's servants might be in the pay of the police. I have heard my father speak of friends of his, who had suddenly been spirited away, never to be heard of again, dragged from their homes at night to be packed off to Cayenne. My father, because he had known some of these, was a suspect and was nearly arrested.

By the way, early though my age, I too fell under the notice of the police. I was arrested when I was about four years old, but that was for an ecclesiastical rather than for a political offence. It happened thus : I had heard a foolish English nursery governess of some little friends of mine inform her charges that these Roman Catholic children with whom they played were idolaters, and consequently the most wicked of people. I was not four years old at this time, and possibly considerably under that age. I did not know the meaning of the word idolaters, but it sounded to me something horribly evil, so I decided to wage a holy war on French children of my own age.

I armed myself with a sharp-pointed stick, and one fine summer's day having escaped from my nurse who was taking me for my daily promenade in the beautiful lime-tree avenue of Tours, which is the favourite haunt of the *bonnes* and their charges, I ran amok among the nurse-attended Catholic babes. I fiercely interrogated every child I met : " *Est-ce que vous êtes idolâtres?* " If, as was usually the case, he or she could give no satisfactory reply, I forthwith belaboured or stabbed the transgressor with my stick.

The lamentation of martyred innocents and objurgations of indignant *bonnes* resounded down the avenue. A nurse assisted by a soldier secured and disarmed me ; wrathful parents came up ; the police were appealed to, and off I was marched to the police station by the *gens d'armes*. My father was sent for and had to pay a fine before I was released. He asked whether he or I should go to gaol for my offence.

" But assuredly you," was my cool reply.

I have since then been an involuntary guest in various prisons, and have been even condemned to death, but never again for the offence of religious persecution.

Well do I remember the beautiful sunlit countryside of Touraine, the meadows where the marguerites grew larger and more splendid than they have ever grown in any land since ; the vineyards ; the Loire winding among its sandy islands ; the romantic gardens of the old *chateaux* ; and it was in Touraine that I learnt to love that fair land of France in which some of the happiest days of my life were spent. We stayed at Tours for a few years, and were then washed out of it by the great inundation of, I think, 1857.

The Loire is very liable to floods, but this was the greatest flood in the memory of man, causing an immense loss of life and destruction of property. That winter there had been an exceptionally heavy downfall of snow in the Cevennes, in whose ravines the Loire and some of its tributaries have their source. The sudden coming of a very hot summer, melting the snow, sent enormous volumes of water rushing down these rivers. Where the Loire flows across Touraine that river is considerably above the level of the bordering plains, its waters being confined to their channel by a huge artificial embankment, known as the *levée* of the Loire. Tours lies in the fork formed by the junction of the Loire and the Cher. The beds of these rivers soon filled up, the water almost reaching the top of the embankments, which were being rapidly strengthened by the labour of the troops of the garrison. But despite these efforts, the *levée* burst, and the town, entrapped between the two rivers, was swept by the raging torrents.

I remember being called up at dawn and hurriedly dressed. I looked out and saw that the water was almost up to the sill of the window on the second floor ; a variety of objects were being carried down by the flood : furniture, mattresses, drowned people. The lower doors and windows of our house had been opened wide so that the water could pass through and not knock down the building. A boat came off and rescued my father, mother, two sisters, the servants and myself. It must have been a dangerous voyage, for we were carried rapidly along, unable to steer clear of obstacles, the boatmen having difficulty in shoving off from the trees that threatened to capsize us. We at last reached dry land and were saved.

I remember that a theological problem was puzzling me. I said to the English protestant governess above-mentioned:

" I thought the Lord promised that there should be no more floods."

Not knowing how to give a satisfactory reply, she evaded it, as is the way of grown-ups when responding to the awkward questions of children.

" You are not old enough to understand," she said. Then a happy thought occurred to her, and she added: " I don't think that He made that promise to Papists."

My father's valuable collection of old china, pictures and books, made in those days when curiosities could readily be picked up in France, were mostly destroyed or swept away by the flood.

Then we left Tours to take up our residence in the old grey city of Bath. We passed through Paris on the way and I saw a triumphal march through the town of French troops returning from the Crimean War, and had a close view of the Emperor Napoleon, in gorgeous uniform, driving in a golden chariot between cheering crowds. We stayed at Bath for several years. My father, who had kept up his classics, grounded me well in Greek and Latin, somewhat to my discomfort, for parents as instructors to their children are apt to wax impatient. I was sent to school at an early age. The school was unfortunately chosen and turned out to be a sort of Dotheboys Hall. It was a boarding school in Weston-super-Mare, then a very small watering place.

I remember well my first day there. The pedagogue, who appeared to me as a ferocious black-bearded ogre, asked me my age. Rather confused, I replied, " Half-past seven," to the great merriment of my schoolfellows, for this happened in the schoolroom. " Is that intended as an impertinence ? " the master said, " if so, I ought to give you an imposition." I asked, in all innocence, what an imposition was. He promptly showed me by giving me so many lines to write out.

This man, I imagine, knew nothing ; at any rate he taught us nothing. He made use of us to work in his garden and elsewhere. Like Squeers he half starved us ; for example, at dinner he gave us rank suet pudding to

eat before meat, and if one could not eat the pudding one had no meat. The boys broke out in boils and blains through bad nutrition. However, I got on well with my fellows, and though always hungry, was fairly happy, especially when bathing in the sea, wherein I learnt to swim like a duck. My father, who had been quite deceived by the oily manners of the master, the appearance of the school, and the smart sample boy, who was brought out for his inspection, quickly withdrew me as soon as he discovered how things were, not on account of any complaints of mine, for I thought that the ways of the school were the ways of schools generally, but through the fuss that was made by other indignant parents.

Bath in those days held a considerable colony of retired naval and military officers (for the most part blessed with many daughters), genial but grousing old chaps, who swore that the service had gone to the dogs. Among these my father met many old comrades in arms. There were several who had fought in the French wars, and I remember two old admirals who had fought at Trafalgar. One of these wore knee-breeches, silk stockings and buckled shoes, a costume which had not quite died out in England.

There then lived in Bath a character of whom I must speak. There was a dingy old curiosity shop in one of the back alleys of Bath, kept by an ancient man called Rudge. My father spent much time there, and used to take me with him. How I enjoyed prowling about that dusty collection of heterogeneous treasures and poring over the old books. The son who lived with his father was a mechanical instrument maker; he was an undoubted genius, and practically anticipated most of the recent inventions of importance. Had he possessed capital or business acumen his would have been a world-wide reputation. He used to give little lectures to his friends in a room over the shop, and at these I followed him with great interest as he demonstrated his inventions. He showed us the gyroscope and foretold its possibilities; he explained to us his system of electric lighting; he had made a primitive cinema and foresaw its development; he believed that we should fly someday, and his experiments convinced him that given light power he could fly

then ; he invented a breach-loading cannon and I know not what else. He died in the 'seventies and was always poor.

Manners and customs have changed a good deal since those days. Teetotallers were few ; afternoon tea was unknown. If you called on your friends, wine and cake were brought out for you. When we went to the seaside, all our luggage, including the bath, was placed above us on the roof of our coach-like railway carriage. Our railway system had not extended nearly so far as it has now, so that in regions not served by the trunk lines one had to travel long distances in the old-fashioned stage coaches. Horse vans drove slowly up and down the country carrying goods, and poor people used to travel with these. Once a new servant whom we had engaged came to us by van ; she arrived nearly a fortnight late, having been snowed up on the Cotswold Hills. Dickens was then in his prime, and well do I remember my mother shortly before her death, reading to us children " Great Expectations," as that novel appeared in monthly parts in " All the year round " in 1860, and how eagerly I used to look forward to each contribution.

I was sent as a day boy to that excellent school the " Somersetshire College," of which Dr. Escott was then the Head. The ways of schools were rough and ready in those days. Thus my form master for a time was a gigantic hot-tempered Cornishman who, when the whole form failed to answer a question used to walk down it hitting every boy over the head with a heavy ruler. I was not a particularly industrious boy, but anything but lazy. I was good in the gymnasium, could jump five-foot-eight before I left school, was so supple that I could clasp my hands and leap backwards and forwards through them as through a skipping rope, and in Evans's baths on the river I taught myself to be an expert swimmer and diver.

It was a fighting age, and the boys at Bath had a rough name. But though far from quarrelsome I could hold my own in the several fights in which I was engaged. I used to experience so many tumbles from trees, and other minor accidents, that I was generally bleeding from hands or face, which earned me the nickname of " Bloody." I remember my father was very angry when he overheard

a boy of my acquaintance allude to him as " old Bloody," and I had to explain.

At a very early age I was possessed by that passion for wandering which inevitably drew me, despite all hindrances, towards the profession which I at last adopted. I was a born nomad. At Bath I played at cricket and football, and fought my full share of " mills " ; but my keenest delight as a child was to walk away and explore the unknown country around my home. Mine was a delicious vagabondage in those days, when everything beyond the nearest hills was a fascinating mystery, when the sky and flowers were brighter and more beautiful than now. Neglecting sports I used to set forth alone at dawn, taking with me a loaf of bread and some cheese, to spend the whole day roaming over the countryside, which seemed to me to become more wonderful the farther I got from home. I looked upon each range of hills in front of me as a barrier between me and the unknown land of wonder beyond, which had to be surmounted. As I topped hill after hill, I seemed to look out upon a fairer fairyland than any I had yet seen. I used to undertake these journeys in summer heat, in rainy windy weather, or when the snow lay deep upon the hills. I never lost myself, but often misjudging time, I got home long after the hours of bed, and would sometimes meet my father on the way anxiously looking out for me.

I could not at all understand the frame of mind of one of my young friends, a fat lazy boy. He had a rich uncle, who in his desire to induce his nephew to take exercise, told him that he would give him a shilling every time he would walk five miles. And even with that promise before him the boy would rarely take a walk. Had I possessed such an uncle I should soon have made my fortune.

I have not visited the country round Bath since those days, and wonder whether it is really so beautiful and wild as my memory pictures it. When I was very young, my great ambition was to run away from home and live in the woods, and I once saved up coppers and biscuits for this purpose.

As I got older it was my desire to be either a soldier or a sailor ; but when I was still very young it was laid down for me that I was to go to the Bar, and in due time

attain the Woolsack ; and indeed I am a barrister, though I have followed so circuitous a way to the Woolsack that it seems farther away than when I started, and it is quite possible that I may not reach it now. Nature, indeed, was stronger than education ; my legal training led me nowhere, whereas my boyish dreams have been largely realized. I have been both a sailor and a soldier ; for I have commanded my own vessels on many seas, and have led troops in action ; whereas for wandering and adventure I have had more of both than my imaginative boyhood ever dreamt of.

For a small boy I tramped extraordinary distances. I often recall in my dreams the delights of those wanderings ; the years have rolled up behind me and I am back in the West Country, as I was then, with the same great love of the hills and flowers, the same long-dead feelings and joys of childhood when all was new and marvellous to me. In my waking hours " A primrose by the river's brim " is no more to me than it was to Wordsworth's Peter, but perhaps these dreams wiping out all the intervening years, and carrying us back to the imaginings of our first childhood, may serve to keep the spirit young, despite the loss of illusion that is brought by years and experience.

As I grew older I taught myself to make sketches and to draw maps of the countryside I traversed ; I devoured books of travel and adventure, and gloated over the records of Livingstone and the Arctic seamen, who at that time were exploring Africa and the mysterious North. I used to write little books then, but in them made no attempt to describe my wanderings. They were books of imaginary adventure, and all used to begin something like this : " When Don Guitaro was old enough he took his long sword and two pistols, packed up his knapsack, and set out on his adventures." These works were illustrated with gruesome pictures.

I was a happy boy at Bath and had, I think, a better time than most of my companions, for I had more sources of amusement in myself than had the average child. The child for whom expensive toys are bought often yawns over them. Boys did not have much pocket money in those days, and I certainly had very little ; so I had to

make what toys I required with the aid of my knife, in the use of which I was very skilled. I made toy theatres, guns, boats, and so forth, and manufactured a most deadly form of catapult. These I would exchange with my fellows for foreign postage stamps. I raffled my collection later at Westminster School for £2. They would now be worth at least £200.

In the toy theatre which I made for my own use, I reproduced the dramas which I saw at the old Bath Theatre, such as " Green Bushes," " The Ticket-of-Leave Man," and " Lady Audley's Secret." I witnessed the destruction by fire of this historic old theatre in 1862—a judgment, said many of the good people at Bath, on the management, because they had called a rehearsal on the previous Good Friday. Most of the best known London actors used to come to Bath to play in the theatre—Charles Matthews, the younger Keen, Sothern and others.

My father knew some of these, and I remember Sothern telling him of an incident that happened at Bath during his stay there. The actor happened to go to the principal hairdresser in Milsom Street to have his hair cut. Said the talkative barber :

" I hear that Mr. Sothern is coming down here to act ; I hear that he is a very bad man, but what can you expect of a person connected with the Stage."

Sothern, fond of a joke, replied :

" Yes, he is a shockingly bad man."

" In his family relations especially, sir, for they say among other things, that he has two wives."

" Six," said Sothern, and proceeded to tell terrible tales about himself to the astonished barber.

The whole story was in the Bath papers the next day, and the credulous barber became the laughing stock of the town.

The game of " Towns " invented by myself afforded a good deal of amusement to my companions. At opposite corners of an empty garret stood two towns, capitals of rival states ; the buildings were of wooden bricks and paper ; the towns were surrounded by a good deal of open country, and were divided from each other by an ocean of blue paper tacked to the floor. By the terms of a Treaty—framed by a sort of League of Nations, which

was drawn up by me in Latin, my father having represented that all agreements between Great Powers were written in that language—the armaments of the two States were equal and limited to so many lead soldiers and so many guns. When war was declared certain rules were rigidly obeyed. A unit could only move a certain distance in one move ; a cannon could only be used when supported by a certain number of men, who had to be exposed, and so forth. War was formally declared at twelve hours' notice ; a pretext for it was readily found by one or the other bellicose party. Thus war was declared upon me once because one of my men-of-war, while cruising in the other's territorial waters, accidentally tore a hole in the paper ocean. At last the " Town" game was prohibited, because it became somewhat dangerous to neutrals.

The League of Nations which could not foresee everything, had only imposed a limit on the number of guns which could be used by each power, but no provisions were made as to the nature of those guns. So our artillery got heavier and heavier ; at first we had only pea-shooting guns, then we employed cannon with powder and shot ; then I constructed a powerful catapult gun that could knock down stout wooden buildings with marbles ; and finally, I made a howitzer with a crinoline whalebone spring to it, which fired flaming balls of cotton wool soaked in spirit, which were intended to burn down the paper houses of the meaner streets, and destroy their helpless inhabitants. The result was that I nearly set the house on fire, so the " Town " game was barred for the future by those who must be obeyed, even by city kings.

It was at Bath that I first came under fire. It was on the occasion of the marriage of the Prince of Wales to Princess Alexandra in 1863. It was a great day of festivities and rejoicings, and we all wore white rosettes made in Coventry, sold for the benefit of the cotton operatives there who had been shut out of work by the American Civil War. At night there was a display of fireworks in the Sydney Gardens. I went to Pulteney Street, which terminates at the great iron gates of the Gardens, and through these I could see the fireworks without paying. Pulteney Street was closely packed with people. In the course of the display some rockets lying horizontally on

a table near the gates accidentally caught fire, and swept down the street, causing a great panic. Several people were killed by the rockets, including a young man who had been married that day.

In the holidays I sometimes stayed with my cousin Frederic Winn Knight at Simonsbath Lodge, Exmoor. Squire Knight, as he was called throughout the countryside, then owned the greater part of Exmoor forest, including Dunkerry Beacon and the Doone Valley; he sold this property later to Lord Fortescue. Squire Knight and his brothers were famous horsemen, and legends of their feats are still to be heard on the moor. The forest was then a good deal wilder than it is now, but little of it being enclosed. Its wastes of lonely moor and bog, heather-covered hills and rushing streams were a perpetual delight to me. I used to wander over the country with a gun, and learnt the ways of the wild animals and how to shoot and snare them. I acquired the art of tickling trout, a poaching trick which my cousin's son taught me—a boy a little older than myself—and we used to cook these over a peat fire in the woods. I hunted with various packs of hounds, including the stag hounds, whose quarry is the wild red deer of Exmoor, and mounted on an Exmoor pony I learnt how to ride in a rough country. The wild ponies of Exmoor were originally very small, but Frederick Knight's father, early in the last century had imported Arab stallions from Dongola, much improving the sturdy breed.

Many years later, during Kitchener's campaign in the Sudan, I landed on the island of Argo on the Nile, and spoke to an old sheikh who remembered his father telling him of the sale of the stallions to the Englishman. I met many of the famous hunting squires of Exmoor, including practically the last of the hunting parsons, the Rev. John Russell, who often visited Simonsbath, a kindly soul whom all the parishioners loved. By the way, he gave me the largest tip that I had ever received till then, half a sovereign.

CHAPTER II

Honfleur.—At Westminster School.—Tramps in France and Italy.—A cheap dinner.—The highroads of France.—Franco-German war of 1870.—Germans occupy Honfleur.—A walk through the rival armies.

WHEN I was about fourteen years of age my father left Bath to take up his residence in a large-gardened house overlooking the sea, outside the old picturesque seaport of Honfleur, in Normandy, my starting point for many a long delightful journey. Then I was sent as a boarder to Westminster School. At that time things went very well at the famous old school; all the boys were proud of its traditions and its curious old customs, which were religiously observed. The monitors had great power and took their responsibilities seriously. When a boy became a monitor he was formally presented with a long cane, tipped with rubber, by the Headmaster, at the end of morning school. Trial by the monitors was invariably just. If one was found guilty of one of the offences which fell under their jurisdiction, such as failing to attend " station " in the cricket field in Vincent's Square at the appointed hour, breaking bounds and so forth, one was " tanned " by the monitors, that is, given so many strokes with the racket bat.

Even as had happened in my first school at Weston-super-Mare, the first words that I uttered in form brought ridicule upon my head and aroused a peal of laughter in which the master joined. The incident indirectly led to my first fight. It fell to me to read out and translate the passage in the Iliad in which occur the words *Viva casa rara fuit.* I pronounced these in the Latin way as I had been taught to do in France. Now at Westminster we were taught to pronounce Latin in the rough English fashion. In the Latin play rendered by the Westminster scholars at Christmas this somewhat barbarous custom is still observed.

Dr. Scott was then the Headmaster of Westminster, than whom a better man for his post could not be found, kind, humorous, a friend of all the boys, yet a firm disciplinarian. I was fortunate in being boarded at

Rigaud's, of which Mr. James, " Jimmy," was the housemaster. He was loved and respected by all the boys under him. The moral tone of the school was very good. The code of honour was the highest I have ever known. Despite Mr. Alec Waugh, whose book by the way I have never read, the public school provided an excellent training in character. If it had a fault it was that it led to a too great trust in the honour of one's fellows, and made one the easy dupe of the sharp practice with which one came in contact after leaving school.

When I got to Cambridge, where there were many men who had not been to a public school, I found that there was some falling off in the code of honour as taught at Westminster, and when I went up to London I found that this falling off was much more marked among the professional men with whom I mixed. And we boys learnt at Westminster how to be courteous and circumspect in our speech, and lying of course was held in abhorrence by us ; to call another boy a liar even in jest was of course an unpardonable offence, and at once provoked a challenge to fight. If one wished to fight one had to obtain leave from one's housemaster and from a monitor. The leave was always given as a matter of course. The fight took place at dawn in the cloister green of Westminster Abbey in the presence of a monitor, and all the boys who were not too lazy to get up formed the ring. If a fight was not brought to a finish in one morning before early school it was continued on the following morning. One fight in my time lasted three mornings.

There was a long-established feud between the Westminster boys and the " skies," the rough street lads of the slums of Westminster. The nearest road to the playground in Vincent's Square traversed their territory. Only boys above the " shell " were permitted to follow that route, but the smaller boys often did so, four or five going together in hopes of a row, which they generally got, and a monitorial tanning to follow. But the " skies " used to ally themselves with the Westminster boys against a foreign foe. Thus during one cricket match between the House of Commons and the School in Vincent's Square, the " skies," looking on through the railings and seeing that the School was being defeated, proceeded to hoot and

stone the Members of Parliament. So the boys had to come to the rescue, rout the " skies " and drive them back to their rookeries ; after the match we escorted the amused members back through the danger zone.

Street fights were not unusual in London at that time, and nobody paid much attention to them. There was none of the hurry and bustle of modern days, as the following incident will show. I was coming down the Brixton Road in a 'bus one day when the conductor had an altercation with a passing butcher. The 'bus stopped ; the butcher laid down his tray and the two disputants took off their coats ; they fought three rounds before the admiring passengers, when the conductor acknowledged himself beaten, and the 'bus quietly resumed its journey. There was no congestion of traffic then, and at Waterloo and at other London bridges there were toll gates at which vehicles and foot passengers had to stop and pay toll. Indeed it was not till the 'seventies that the last bridges were freed and the toll-gates taken down.

Several red letter days stand out in my recollection of my school days. I remember that when the Derby was run in a snowstorm—I think it was in Hermit's year, 1867—my father, who had come up for the race and had I imagine backed a winner, took me out to dinner at Verrey's restaurant. On that occasion I tasted champagne for the first time in my life. When I drink it now I sometimes shut my eyes and vainly try to recall the delicious flavour it had then. Afterwards we went to Astley's to see Ada Menken in " Mazeppa."

I had a happy life at Rigaud's, learnt some classics, but no mathematics. Westminster was of the old world. Only classics counted in one's position in the form. I believe one might be at the head of the school and scarcely know long division. A follower of mathematics was looked upon as somewhat of a crank, and a boy at Rigaud's was nicknamed " Cosine " because he had attained some mysterious heights in mathematics wherein this term is employed. But was that mediæval method of imparting knowledge to youth so far wrong after all? Boyhood is the period for inculcating the love of classics, without which no education is complete, and it is also the period by the way in which modern languages are readily

acquired. It is the reverse with mathematics ; an average boy's brain finds difficulty in grasping them, and with years of study he makes little progress. It is only when the brain is more developed that, as by magic, his eyes are suddenly opened, that the reasoning powers become acute, and that, without effort, he learns in a few months far more than years of useless drudgery have taught him.

Take my own case. Shortly before I went to Cambridge M. Boudin, of the Honfleur Lycée, was appointed to brush up my mathematics. He was an excellent teacher, and seeing that for the first time in my life I took the keenest interest in this new study, he took an interest in me, and with an amazing rapidity carried his willing pupil step after step through spherical trigonometry to higher subjects. After a few months of this treatment when I went to Cambridge, my tutor, in view of the mathematical papers which I passed, advised me to take up the mathematical tripos. How logical and clear is the French method of imparting elementary mathematics ! Compare for example the French school geometry with the clumsy Euclid which was used in the schools of my day.

My Bath experiences made me the best climber in the school. There were very few others who indulged in this adventurous sport. Racket balls were constantly being lost by players in the little fives court at Rigaud's. They were knocked over the roofs of neighbouring houses and into their gardens. These I used to recover at night, scrambling over the roofs, and picking up the balls from the roof gutters. It was perilous but profitable work. Then, not in search of balls but in spirit of exploration, I used by daylight to explore the leads and curious passages on the top of Westminster Abbey. I found all sorts of hidden places where the dust lay so thick that it could not have been disturbed for many years. I gained access to these by climbing up the gateway of the school in Little Dean's Yard.

I spent my holidays in Honfleur, and was never weary of walking over the beautiful Norman countryside. At first I had to content myself with exploring and carefully mapping out (for I taught myself surveying and drawing) the wild country round Honfleur as far in every direction as a day's walk would carry me, and that was a considerable distance, for I was a stout walker. I explored

the spacious forests and wandered along the sea coast and the banks of the winding Seine. Then I became restless and wished to extend my wanderings to the unknown beyond. I persuaded my father to let me go away for several days or weeks. At the beginning of one midsummer's holiday for example, he gave me what he considered sufficient money to last me for a week on the road, living economically. But so fond was I of vagabondage that I did not care how roughly I fared, provided that I could live that free open life, and I economized to such an extent that I was away not for a week, but five weeks, and had walked as far as the mountains of Auvergne.

Later on, during the long interval that elapsed between my leaving Westminster and my going up to Cambridge, I travelled still farther. For I was taken away from Westminster because I was supposed to get bleeding from the lungs, and a specialist diagnosed consumption. In my opinion I had nothing of the sort, and had possibly broken a small blood vessel while trying to swim under water for as long as possible, as was my habit in the Smith Street baths, which were frequented by the Westminster boys. At any rate the specialist ordered removal from school, a country life and plenty of fresh air, which suited me exactly, and I proceeded to administer the prescribed cure most faithfully.

I used to save all my pocket money to spend on my walking tours. I reckoned that for two sous I could travel more than a mile, and that thus I could walk more than two hundred and fifty miles for every pound that I saved. My baggage was contained in a sepoy's ox-hide knapsack, a present from a colonel who had served in the Indian Mutiny. In one pouch of the knapsack I generally carried a loaf of bread, a sausage, or some Gruyère cheese, and in the other pouch a bottle of red wine. I travelled very light, burdening myself with no blanket but carrying a thin mackintosh rolled up on the top of my knapsack. My London physician would have been pleased to see how thoroughly I followed his open-air treatment.

On these tramps I used as a rule to bivouac in the woods, or under the ferns and heather on the moor, not so much for economy's sake but because I loved to sleep with only the sky and the stars above me. My mackintosh

was not much protection against the cold that came on after sunset in clear weather, so at times for warmth's sake I would walk on through the quiet moonlit summer nights, only the barking of the disturbed watchdogs breaking the silence as I passed some wayside farm. In rough weather I sought the shelter of some humble *auberge*, where either a bush over the door or the legend : *Loge à pied et à cheval. Ici on donne à boire et à manger* welcomed the traveller. One could live in absolute luxury on the roads of France in those days on two or three francs a day, when a bottle of good wine cost twopence, and a *Petit* Bordeaux cigar could be bought for one sou. I remember once, when I ran short of money and had to be very economical, having an excellent meal in Marseilles in a cellar frequented by dock labourers—an immense plateful of little fish fried in oil, one penny ; a large lump of coarse bread, a half-penny ; half a bottle of wine, a penny ; twopence-halfpenny for a square meal.

If I walked an exceptional number of miles in a day I used to treat myself to a good dinner and a bottle of extra special burgundy, price sixpence. Never shall I forget the kindness of the French people with whom I came in contact during these journeys in every part of France—innkeepers ; peasants ; tramps ; journeymen workmen ; *comi voyageurs ;* pedlars of cheap jewellery ; the Savoyards who carried on their backs huge loads of medicinal mountain herbs to sell all over the country ; soldiers on furlough travelling on foot to their homes ; travelling players and mountebanks ; all jolly and friendly companions of the road. How frank was the welcome that was given to one as one entered an inn ; how cheery and bright was the life in the villages ; how innocently festive when a fair was being held. Truly they understand how to live in sunny France. Compare the bright atmosphere of a French village with the heavy dullness, the suspicion of a stranger that prevails in the villages in many parts of England.

I used to meet some interesting characters on the road, including specimens of that long-extinct race the *marchands d'hommes*, hated by the poorer mothers of France. These used to come up and talk to me, thinking that I looked like a possible subject for their business.

The *marchand d'hommes* was the individual who used to tramp the high roads and byways of France to buy the young men who had drawn a lucky number in the conscription, and so were exempt from service. He was in short the middleman between the lad who had drawn a good number but was willing to serve for a consideration, and the rich farmer's son who had drawn a bad number and was ready to purchase a substitute for himself. The *marchands d'hommes* were very industrious and as clever at persuasion as our own recruiting sergeants.

When on the road I used to sketch and write a full narrative of my journey, thus acquiring the faculty of observation and unconsciously educating myself for my coming profession. In those days I was seldom taken for a foreigner in France, for I knew the language well, and was also conversant with several patois, of which the Parisian would not understand a word. I was familiar too with the argot of the tramps, with whom I often had to associate, and in very queer company I sometimes found myself.

Many thousands of miles I travelled through France. I still possess hundreds of pen and ink sketches which I made during those happy wanderings, and when I look over these or follow the long white roads on a road map of France, they recall all the scenery to me, and innumerable memories. I remember my wonder and delight when after walking up the forest-clad ravines of the Jura, I reached the summit of the Col de St. Cergues and suddenly opened out an immense sunlit panorama, embracing the whole of the lake of Geneva, and half the Swiss mountains, snowy range behind range, Mont Blanc dominating all ; or again when I first saw the Mediterranean from a pass in the Maritime Alps ; or yet again when from a height above Boghari I looked out on the far-spreading mysterious wastes of the Sahara.

In the course of these tours I walked through Normandy and Brittany, along the Loire, Rhone, and Garonne, through Burgundy, Savoy, Dauphiné, Auvergne and Provence, across the Alps through Piedmont and Lombardy. It was the mountains that attracted me the most. I crossed and re-crossed the Alps by little-used passes, and sometimes lost myself in the snows. Once when

crossing the Alps from Italy to France by the Col d'Abriés I lost myself on the summit in a heavy snow-storm and had to pass the night under a rock. The next morning I descended the difficult and trackless slopes of the mountain until I came to an old shepherd, who gave me black bread and goat's milk cheese. He could not make out where I had come from, and I found that I had not got back to France, but had crossed some spur of the mountains back to Italy in the Vaudois Valleys.

In 1870 war broke out between France and Germany. Great was the patriotic enthusiasm of the Honfleurais. The crowd shouted "*A Berlin*" as troop train after troop train steamed out of the station. The stirring *Marseillaise* was sung everywhere. Till then to sing that song in France had been a penal offence, but at the order of Napoleon a military band struck it up for the first time at a dinner given at the Tuilleries, and then the whole country was allowed to chant it.

I caught the war fever, and my sympathies were of course with France. I decided to volunteer, and one day without saying a word to my father I walked to Lisieux, a distance of over twenty miles, where I understood that volunteers were being enrolled, reported myself there, was approved of, and was asked my name. It surprised the recruiting officer that I possessed a name that contained five consonants and only one vowel.

"What is your nationality?" he asked.

I told him.

"Sorry," he said, "but we are taking no aliens."

However, later on, they did take aliens, and of course had I known, I might have gone to Paris and joined the Foreign Legion. Bitterly disappointed, I trudged the twenty miles back to Honfleur and never told my father where I had been.

The war progressed. We were cheered by seeing captured German merchant vessels being towed into Honfleur, but things were going very badly for poor France, as we gathered from the English papers that we received. However, the bulletins that came from Paris and were posted outside the *Mairie*, lying of victories and concealing defeats, kept up the spirits of the crowds that came to read them. Then the truth leaked out and

there was great depression. Sedan had been lost, the Emperor Napoleon had abdicated and the Republic was proclaimed. Still the hopeless conflict was carried on, the Germans reached Rouen, and from that city, in the bitterest winter weather in the memory of man, there poured into Honfleur a sad procession of sixty thousand retreating *moblots*, miserable, starving and smallpox-ridden. Many perished during that sixty miles' retreat from Rouen, and the road was strewn with their frozen corpses. They filled the churches of the little town until they could be transported in steamers to Havre. They left us the smallpox in Honfleur, for the town and neighbouring countryside was soon afflicted with a severe epidemic of that disease.

The farthest point to which the Germans advanced on the right bank of the Seine was Caudebec, but on the left bank they came as far as Honfleur. I was walking along the Pont l'Eveque road when I fell in with them first—Uhlans, infantry and artillery. A colonel who was riding at the head of the column stopped and spoke to me, first in bad French and then in very good English. He told me that his horse was English and asked some questions as to the condition of the road ahead across which trenches had been dug. The Germans raised a levy of money from the town, requisitioned food and forage, and billeted their men on the inhabitants. Three soldiers were billeted in our house.

The Germans behaved well in the town, but I think that they were Saxons and not Prussians, and Prussianism had not then permeated and brutalized the rest of Germany, as it has since. The Germans of the war of 1870 justly acquired the reputation of stealing all the clocks and watches that they could lay their hands upon. Curiously enough the three young Germans billeted upon us took away with them none of our timepieces, but one of them left a watch behind in our house. He wrote for it afterwards from Rouen, and the envelope to the amusement of our postman was addressed to M. Rentier Knight. It was funny to observe the German soldiers who had never seen the sea before walk down to the beach to taste it, to satisfy themselves that it was salt, as their geography books had informed them.

During the armistice I went on one of my walking tours along the banks of the Seine to Rouen and through the occupied territory, and everywhere I found that the Germans were behaving well. It is strange that during this tour I was never asked for my passport by French or Germans.

It was shortly after this, in the course of a walking tour, that I visited Lyons. The Communist rising had been stamped out in Paris, but in Lyons the revolution was still holding its own. After entering the somewhat excited city I found my way up steep streets to the Croix Rousse, the workmen's quarter, on a height dominating the town, where the Communists had some artillery posted. I took up my abode in a quadrangle of single rooms which were let to workmen at a very moderate rent. One was master of one's room and had a key to it. There was no attendance, and one did one's own housekeeping and catering. I took one of these rooms for a week and saw a good deal of the Communist working men. Despite their views, which were detestable to a born Tory like myself, they were I found a very decent lot of fellows. I had my meals in a workman's restaurant, where the food was excellent. If one ordered a dish, one found that the cost of it was printed in large type on the plate that brought it, so that at the end of a meal one's score was quickly made up by adding up the figures on the plates. I attended an amateur performance of "*Le Juif Errant*," the proceeds of which were to be devoted to the aid of the widows and orphans of the Communists who had been killed in Paris. The anti-Jesuit and anti-Capitalist sentiments expressed in the play were loudly applauded. It was a very lengthy performance, but each of the audience had provided himself with tobacco, a large sausage, a loaf of bread and a bottle of wine, wherewith to wile away the long waits.

I also attended a political meeting and heard a degenerate-looking intellectual and an unfrocked priest address the sturdy working men in venomous, blasphemous speeches, inciting them to murder. These two orators, I am happy to say, did not much impress the working men. "Plenty of words," said one to me, "but these have never fought and never worked."

CHAPTER III

A tramp through Algeria.—With French soldiers.—Laghouat.—A prisoner.—I go to Cambridge.—In the College boats.—The call of the water.—A canoe journey across France.—The Seine estuary.—The bore.—I take my degree.

SHORTLY before I went up to Cambridge I took the last of my solitary walking tours. This time my destination was Algeria, for I was fascinated by what I had read of the Sahara. I took with me fifteen pounds, by far the largest sum that I had ever had in my pocket before, and on this I was away for several months. First I took train to Lyons, and from there travelled on foot to Marseilles by forced marches. I found there a steamer of the Compagnie Mixte bound for Algiers ; the fare for a deck passage was only fifteen francs or so. My fellow passengers on deck were refugees from Alsace and Lorraine, men, women and children who would not stay under the German rule. I fraternized with these, and found that they were not going haphazard to seek their fortunes in Africa ; a paternal government had settled everything for them. To each group of families coming from the same district a certain grant of land had been allotted and each group carried with it its *maire*, its priest, its schoolmaster, and, I believe, its *gens d'armes*. The allotted land was to be portioned out between the families on their arrival at their new home, and of course cattle, seed and agricultural implements were provided for them. From what I saw of the Alsatian colonies that had already been started in the fertile Tell, the system worked well.

The French do everything with method. If you looked at a map of Algeria of those days you saw scattered all over the cultivable belt north of the Atlas, villages, each surrounded by a dotted ring of say eight miles diameter, which indicated the official limit of colonization, the intervening country being, I suppose, left to the Arabs for the time being. I heard from these refugees stories of their treatment by the German invaders which showed that the Prussians were no less barbarous then than now.

We encountered a *mistral* in the Gulf of Lyons, and so as to prevent our being washed overboard, we deck passengers were all huddled below into a hold to make ourselves as comfortable as we could in the dark, among sacks of seed potatoes. Food was of course not included in the fifteen francs passage money, but we drew excellent and cheap rations from a canteen on deck.

Algiers, with its Arabian-night-like narrow native alleys of the Kasbah, on the heights above the European portion of the town, its bazaars and its mosques, of course delighted me, so I stayed there for a few days and then started to walk south. I used to sleep in the open as in France, taking the precaution of waiting till dark before I selected my sleeping place among the *palmettos*, so that Arab prowlers, of whom I had been warned, should not find me ; I was provided with a small pin-fire revolver. In the towns I used to put up at an inn, generally one of the numerous Maltese *auberges*. When I entered one of these I was at first looked upon with suspicion because I spoke French, but as soon as they knew that I was English they welcomed me heartily, as being a fellow subject of Queen Victoria.

There can be no doubt that in those days if one wandered about Europe in the way I did one was much better received if one was of British than if one was of any other nationality. I found this very much marked in Italy : they did not like the French in Piedmont, and still less did they like the Austrians, from whose sway they had not long since freed themselves ; but with an Englishman the people were friends at once. I nearly got into a row once when entering an inn on the Italian side of a little-used pass in the Alps. There were some drunken ruffians—smugglers I think—inside the inn, who took me for a hated Tudesque, and threatened me with their long knives, until they heard that I was English ; then all was well.

Later on in Dalmatia and Albania I had similar experiences. In France itself it was often better to be an Englishman than a Frenchman. This was of course due to the jealousies between the various provinces, in which, as a foreigner, I had no part. In Provence, they disliked the people of the north, and *français* was used

as a term of reproach. Walking along a road in Finisterre I fell in with an old farmer in full Breton dress ; I asked him if I was on the right road to some village or other ; he answered briefly and sullenly and pretended that he had very little French. But when he discovered that I was English his manner completely changed.

" I thought that you were a *sacré machin de Brest*," he said, took me into his farm, gave me a *chopine* of cool cider and some walnuts, and conversed most genially. The old-fashioned Bretons then disliked Frenchmen, and likewise the citizens of Brest, whom they regarded as being corrupted by the large admixture of French blood in the population. In the United Kingdom too we have no lack of these local prejudices, and " here comes a stranger, let's heave a brick at him " expresses the sentiment of many of our countrymen when he sees a " foreigner." Yes, one found oneself very popular in France in those days, but sometimes a companion of the road would say to me reproachfully : " We helped you to fight the Russians in the Crimean War. Why did England not come to our assistance against the Prussians ? "

And so I marched south, first through the Metidja, the fertile coast strip that was the granary of Rome, across the ranges of the Maritime Atlas, with their fine defiles and forests, and so came to the military post of Boghari on the edge of the desert. Here, luckily I fell in with soldiers who formed part of some details—infantry, mounted Spahis, Foreign Legionaries and others—who were to march south across the desert to Laghout, two hundred and fifty miles to the south of Algiers, then, if I remember rightly, the last French outpost on the long caravan route to Timbuctoo. They had no officers with them, but some sergeants and corporals were in charge of them.

I arranged with some of these that I should accompany them, attaching myself to one of the little messes of six —I think that is the number—in which French infantrymen used to combine, sharing their rations and each taking it in turn to cook. I paid a small sum as my contribution to the mess. The rations were simple but nourishing—a pannikin of black coffee and a lump of bread at dawn, before starting the day's march ; and a principal meal

eaten *a la gamelle*, consisting of a stew of haricots in a large pot with square inches of bacon at the bottom of it, a lump for each of the mess. The six men, each provided with a spoon, squatted round the pot and when the head of the mess gave the signal by hammering the edge of the pot with his spoon, all began to eat. I got on very well with the jolly French soldiers. They were a tough lot, and without showing any signs of fatigue, marched a remarkable number of miles each day. With my long training in walking I had no difficulty in keeping up with them, and I observed that some of them got sore feet, whereas I did not.

We generally reached a government caravanserai at the end of each *étape*—a square of loop-holed walls enclosing sheds and an Artesian well. The journey across the desert, with its ever-varying atmospheric effects, *shotts*, mirages and oases, was a wonderful experience for me. Though it was midsummer the climate was delicious ; the heat was quite supportable, for there was no moisture in the pure air, and the nights were delightfully cool in consequence of the great radiation.

While on this march I had a curious experience. The mounted Spahis who were with us were in charge of some prisoners, soldiers who had committed various offences. One day the following conversation took place between me and one of these prisoners.

" Do you know Honfleur ? " he asked me.

" Yes, I live there," I replied.

" Do you know Madame X, an *épicière* there ? "

" Of course, she lives just opposite our house on the Route St. Clair ; we get our groceries from her."

" I am her nephew ; my name is ' M ' ; will you tell her that you have seen me when you get back ? "

A few days later, having, I noticed, begged a good deal of tobacco from us, he effected his escape under cover of a sandstorm, and we left some of the Spahis behind us scouring the desert for him. On returning home I informed Madame " X " that I had met her nephew " M " in the desert.

" Ah, do not speak of him ! " she exclaimed. " He was a *très mauvais sujet* and broke his mother's heart. He was

captured after he left you to escape into the desert, and we have now heard officially that he was shot."

At Djelfa, the one garrisoned post which we passed on the way to Laghout, we were joined by a strange old man in mufti who had a history. Many years before he had deserted from the French army, and had fled to the oasis of Fighig, which is about three hundred and fifty miles south-west of Djelfa on the Moroccan frontier. Fighig was a place of refuge for deserters from the French and Spanish armies, and for criminals of all sorts. These mixed with the Arabs, adopted the Mohammedan religion and took to themselves Musselman wives. With the aid of the predatory Arabs they used to raid caravans and enrich themselves by other lawless methods. The French, so far, had made no serious attempts to destroy this nest of brigands ; for to attack it with any hope of success would necessitate the despatch of a formidable force, and there was but little water to be found on the routes that lead to Fighig.

This old man had spent the best years of his life among these outlaws, but while travelling north on one occasion he was captured by the French, who made him complete his term of service with the colours. He had just been set free again, and was on his way back to Fighig, where he hoped to find his wives waiting for him. He told us some strange stories of that mysterious place, but when I suggested that I should accompany him there he would not hear of it. Several years before this he had become a *marabout* or holy man, and whenever we encamped near some Arabs he would don a *burnous* and go to them to pray and recite the Koran. All through the desert he was regarded as a saint and treated with great respect. The offerings that were made to him by the faithful he would exchange for absinthe at the earliest opportunity and make himself very drunk.

At Laghouat, a large and very picturesque place, we came to the foothills of the great Atlas, beyond which the desert becomes much more barren and savage. I bade farewell to my soldier friends and set out for the north again, for it was impossible for me to travel further south alone and on foot ; for the wells were far apart, and, moreover, it would have been very unsafe to do so ; the

great rising of the Arabs which had followed the Franco-German war had only just been crushed. In the course of that rising the Arabs had almost driven the French into the seas, and the regions south of the Atlas were still in a very disturbed state, those tribesmen who had not laid down their arms having taken refuge there.

When I got back to Blidah I walked westward in zig-zag fashion, sometimes among the mountains, sometimes along the romantic coast where the ruins of the old Roman settlements often meet the eye. At an inn in Constantine I came across a young Arab waiter whose home was in the mountains where the Khabyles dwell. He spoke to me so enthusiastically of the beauties of that wild region that I decided to visit it, and he gave me a letter to his family. When I got to that country I was most hospitably treated by these descendants of those who had fought with such bravery when the French invaded their country, and had the opportunity of studying their manners and customs. The *couscousou*, by the way, that the Khabyles made was the best that I had come across in Algeria.

Later on, in the course of my wanderings, I came to a little French village called Vesoul Benian. Here I was arrested by the *maire*, a pompous insolent little *albino*. He took me for an English spy, for at that time there was some friction in the Anglo-French relations over what was termed *l'affaire de Tunis* in the local press. His pretext for my arrest was that my passport bore no *visée*. I explained to him that M. Thiers, while President, had arranged with our Government that no *visées* were required on British passports.

"But M. Thiers is no longer President. General Macmahon is our President now," he exclaimed.

He evidently thought that at every change of the Presidentship all international conventions with France ceased to have effect. A mounted Arab was despatched to the nearest telegraph station with a telegram to Mr. Playfair, the British Consul-General at Algiers. The Arab came back in two days with a satisfactory reply from Mr. Playfair to myself and instructions to the *maire* to release me at once. The *maire* must have got a severe wigging from the authorities, for as soon as he received his instructions late at night, he hurried to me and set

me free. He asked me to pay for the mounted Arab, which I refused to do, leaving him to meet the cost of his error, to the great amusement of the innkeeper and his cronies, for the *maire* was evidently unpopular.

Ultimately I returned to Marseilles via Algiers. It was then that I indulged in the twopence-halfpenny dinner in the cellar of which I have already spoken. I now found that I had not nearly enough money left to pay for my third-class fare by rail to Honfleur—nearly six hundred miles across France. My purse did not contain more than thirty or forty francs. Of course I did not telegraph for more funds, but by walking a great part of the way, sleeping in the open, and making long railway journeys by night, I managed it. I was blackened by the sun and my clothes were so disreputable that I timed myself so as to enter Honfleur under cover of the darkness, slept in the garden of my father's house, and entered the house early in the morning as soon as the servants were up. I had eaten up pretty well everything there was in the house before my father and sisters came down to breakfast. And that was to be the last of my lonely walking tours, for shortly after this I went to Cambridge.

My college at Cambridge was Gonville and Caius, " the right little, tight little college," of the Caius song. I spent three very happy years there and made lots of good friends. Cambridge, I think, was then a pleasanter place than it is now. Long-haired Fabians and other Socialist cranks were unknown and the undergraduates were human beings, as thank God many of them are now, to judge from those I see at Henley Regatta each year. I used to row in the college boats in the May term bumping races, but my rowing career was interrupted by an epidemic of typhoid which hit me badly.

I was rather erratic in my studies for I worked in turn on the mathematical, law, and moral science triposes. The latter, the subjects for which included psychology, logic and political economy, had a great fascination for me. It is amusing to remark now how the philosophies of those days, more especially political economy, are hopelessly out of date, and how the great teachers whom we revered have been thrown from their pedestals. At last I

abandoned work for the tripos, having wisely come to the conclusion that vacations were better spent in wandering under the skies than in reading for exams. So I decided to take an ordinary degree, selecting political economy as the subject for my " special." To my surprise, in the examination I came out first of the First Class, and a friend whom I had coached for my amusement came out second in the First Class. But of course, as all know who realize what " specials " are, this is a small matter on which to congratulate oneself.

My father died while I was at Cambridge, and now at the age of twenty-one I came into a few hundreds a year proceeding from a fund in Chancery. After my economical youth I thought myself passing rich, but when I went to London I soon found that I was nothing of the sort ; and that what would be affluence to a boy travelling on foot in France was a pittance for a young man about town.

It was while I was at Cambridge that I became obsessed with the love of the water. For years boating had charms for me. I used to meditate on long cruises on far-off romantic rivers and seas ; but I had no boat wherewith to gratify this yearning. Mr. McGregor, who had come to Cambridge to start a branch of the Royal Canoe Club, inspired me with the idea of undertaking a voyage in one of the Rob Roy canoes, of which he was the designer. I bought one of these handy craft, and in one long vacation my brother-in-law and myself in our two canoes, sailing and paddling, started from Honfleur, ascended the Seine for a long distance, entrained the canoes to Auxonne, descended the Saone and the rapid Rhone through Lyons to Nimes, then took train to Lengeac in Auvergne, where we found the Allier to be a mountain torrent far above the limit of navigation. All the inhabitants of Lengeac came to see us off, and prophesied disaster among the rapids and cascades. We had to make many portages to avoid the worst of these and had some narrow escapes, but with the rock-battered canoes reached Vichi and navigable waters. Then we descended the Allier to its junction with the Loire, proceeded down that river of many sandy islands and so got home again.

Then I bought a small open sailing boat with which I used to sail about the estuary of the Seine and ascend

that river as far as Elbeuf. In these dangerous waters I taught myself seamanship. The spring tides attain a speed of eight knots in the estuary. At high water all the shoals are covered from shore to shore, which are from six to seven miles apart. At low water the river flows in narrow winding channels between many mud flats, sand banks, and quicksands. I did not know that it was unsafe to leave Honfleur at dead low water when bound up the Seine, but made the discovery for myself, and at no small risk. Providence protects the ignorant.

I was rowing up one of the loops of the winding river at low water; the channel which I was following was at right angles to the main direction of the river and was bordered by high steep mud banks. Suddenly I heard a roar and then the flood tide came up with a rush, to my surprise not flowing up the channel but falling in a foaming cascade over the mud bank on my port hand, and all but swamping or capsizing me. In a moment the channel was full and overflowing, the water rushing across the flats. All I could do was to throw my anchor over so as to keep the boat's head on to the tide, and so prevent her from being rolled over and over on the flat. And so I waited, tumbling about, shipping water, and sometimes dragging my anchor, until the furious tide had risen high enough to enable me to up anchor and sail on with safety in deep water.

The Mascaret or Bore of the Seine presents a magnificent spectacle, and at spring tides people come all the way from Paris to see it. The tide, flowing up the broad estuary, concentrates in the narrows near Quillebeuf, and forming a huge steep wave rushes up the valley of the Seine with a great roar that can be heard leagues away. Along the banks—at the quay at Caudebec, for example—it piles up to the height of twenty feet. There are certain places, as at Quillebeuf and La Mailleraye, at bends of the river, where a vessel can remain at anchor in safety while the bore passes by, the fury of the bore being spent on the further side of the bend. Vessels lying alongside a quay proceed to the middle of the river when the bore is expected and then meet it end on.

I saw an English steamer unloading cement at Villequier nearly come to grief: misjudging the hour of the bore

she did not get clear of the quay until it was almost too late. She reached the middle of the river, but she had not given herself time to turn, so the bore struck her broadside on, swept her decks and carried her boats and some of her deck-houses away. At another time a large sailing vessel, with four estuary pilots on board who were returning to Quillebeuf, struck a bank ; she was rolled over by the furious tides and all hands were drowned.

The approaches to Honfleur itself were not particularly safe. I remember a vessel laden with grain running ashore just outside the port and breaking her back. The water-sodden grain was brought on shore and piled up on the quay. It there fermented and attracted all the many fowls in the neighbourhood, who eagerly devoured it and got very drunk. It was amusing to see them staggering about the town, the cocks pompously pretending that they were quite sober. At some risk and not without accidents now and again I learnt all that was to be known of the Seine and its bore. I knew the places at which I could safely anchor. When the Havre tide table indicated less than a certain height of water and the wind was off the shore in the bay I discovered that the bore would not be formidable enough to hurt me, provided that I kept away from the banks. So at neaps instead of seeking one of the anchorages I would lower my sails when I heard the bore coming, meet it end on in the middle of the river, and allow it to pass harmlessly by. And I also learnt to keep a keen look out for the violent squalls which, taking one suddenly aback, used to sweep down from the high shores as one came round one of the sharp bends of the river ; and I also made a mental note of all the most comfortable inns on the banks of the Seine.

Since those days a canal has been constructed from Havre to Lillebonne, whereby vessels bound for Rouen can avoid the dangers of the estuary ; and I hear too that the mouth of the river is better marked than it was, and that since its channel has been confined within the *enrochements*, the bore is broken up before it reaches the narrows and is less formidable than it was. Before I left Cambridge, Picket, of West Quay, Southampton, built a five-ton yawl for me, in which I used to cruise about the Channel and the West coast of France alone,

and sail up my beloved Seine. I still spent my vacations in travel ; but not on foot now, for I took to the water, and with my boats and small yachts, generally sailing alone, as captain, cook and crew, came to know almost as much of the coasts and rivers of France as I had known of its roads and byways.

CHAPTER IV.

Life in town.—Called to the Bar.—Evans's and the Albion.—Russo-Turkish war.—Travel in Albania and Montenegro.—Captain Burton.—Cettinje.—Scutari.—The Albanian league.—We go into the mountains.

AFTER taking my degree I resided in Chambers in the Temple, ate my dinners in Lincoln's Inn, passed my law examinations, was called to the Bar and had a very merry call supper, the memory of which still lingers in the Temple. For awhile I devilled for a Barrister. I found my new life in London as a man-about-town very interesting to me. I joined Bohemian Clubs and for several years was a member of the Savage. Old-fashioned Bohemianism flourished in those days ; in the circles of literary men, journalists, artists, actors and lawyers, which I frequented, men of repute made use of the taverns much more than they do now. What pleasant suppers one used to partake of at the old Albion and at Evans (that haunt immortalized by Thackeray) before the members of the fair sex were admitted—simple suppers, the best of beef steaks and chops and the mealiest of potatoes. I used to know many of the famous men who frequented these snug places. Among these was the genial George Augustus Sala, who introduced himself to me as an old friend of my father's. My father had known Sala when the latter was a boy and often spoke to me of him.

The passenger steamers—not Mr. Burns's teetotal failures—used to run up and down the Thames then ; and many a pleasant trip I used to make to Greenwich to partake of a fish dinner at the Ship, as did our Ministers, who were convivial beings in those days ; or with a merry party drive to the Star and Garter at Richmond. No motor cars troubled the roads then, and all the world, from Duke to coster, in the highest spirits, drove to the Derby. And very agreeable too was a day spent in a boat on the summer Thames with the right companion ; there were no motor launches racing along in the charge of vulgar profiteers who take no heed of

the convenience of others; and there were simple charming little inns along the banks of the river, not the vulgar, expensive hotels with German waiters that have since arisen to suit the ostentatious tastes of the newly-leisured. The present generation is to be pitied, for it knows not the happy England of the 'sixties and 'seventies; but it is true that we had not then the night clubs and the cocaine orgies.

I spent a good deal of the long vacation in cruising about in the Ripple. But I was rather restless, meditating travels into wilder regions where there was not so much civilization as in England. It was towards the close of the war between Russia and Turkey. The sympathies of the man in the street were all with Turkey, and the great Macdermott in the Pavilion Music Hall was singing to enthusiastic audiences his famous patriotic song which has introduced the new word "jingo" to the English Dictionary.

I had in vain approached some editors with a view to being sent to the theatre of war as a correspondent. But the few papers that did send representatives to the front had their own tried men there, and as I had done no work of the sort and was an unknown quantity they would not give me a chance. One afternoon I took it into my head to go to a great jingo meeting in Cremorne Gardens where there might be some fun, as there generally was at these tumultuous assemblies.

The glories of Cremorne Gardens had had their day. The Gardens had recently been closed and the land on which they stood was to be sold; but they were to be opened on this occasion for the last time. I found when I got there that the thousands of lamps, the dancing platform, the plaster statues and all the other gimcrack ornaments were still in their old positions. A speech made by a pro-Russian of course stirred up a riot in which some heads were broken and all the decorations of Cremorne were smashed up by the contending crowds. And that was the end of the famous gardens. In the midst of the mêlée I came across a barrister friend of mine who said:

"You are just the man I wanted to see. Do you feel inclined to go to Turkey?"

I replied that to do so would suit me very well. It appeared that one, Robinson, as I shall here call him, then a very young man but already a famous artist, proposed to undertake a journey in that little-known land, Northern Albania, and he wanted me to join him.

I met Robinson and arranged to accompany him. The idea was to travel on foot, taking pack animals with us to carry our baggage and stores. We were to be well armed with repeating rifles and revolvers. At last the expedition was organized. There were four of us, all young men—Robinson, who was to supply sketches to an illustrated London paper, Jones, the journalist, who was to act as correspondent to some paper ; Brown, the artist, and myself, a freelance journalist who was to send letters to various papers and afterwards wrote a book describing the adventures of the expedition. Business detained Robinson and prevented the expedition from starting for some time, and in the meanwhile peace was declared between Russia and Turkey. Impatient at the delay, Brown and myself at last decided to travel to Albania in advance of the other two and await their coming there.

We crossed five frontiers without being asked any questions, but felt somewhat nervous when we got to Modane, for the Italian custom house officers had instructions to confiscate all revolvers, and each of us was carrying a large army revolver with ammunition. But we got through safely though the inspection was very thorough, and a passenger who passed the barrier just in front of us got into great trouble because he had two ripe pears in his possession.

At Trieste we had to wait for a day for the steamer that was to take us down the coast, so we called on our Consul-General, the famous traveller, Captain Burton. He looked the man who was made for a life of adventure—tall, broad and muscular, with bronzed rugged grim face. He was evidently a tough customer to have as an enemy, but he was very genial in his manner and the smile that often lit up his features was very attractive. One liked the man at first sight. He was interested in our proposed journey, and seeing that we knew nothing of the country to which we were going, gave us a lot of useful advice,

told us to take plenty of quinine, as the fever season had commenced in Albania; warned us that probably we should find ourselves in the middle of a fierce guerilla war before the close of the autumn, and hoped that we would exercise discretion as otherwise we might be taken as spies and lose our heads. He said that he wished he were coming with us, and I was much struck by the boyish enthusiasm he displayed when talking of travel.

The next morning we boarded the Austrian-Lloyd steamer and proceeded on our cruise down the eastern shore of the beautiful Adriatic, calling at every picturesque port with its ancient fortress or Byzantine church rising from the water's edge, to recall the days of Venetian rule, or its still more ancient amphitheatres and temples, relics of old Rome. At last we came to that wonderful town, Spalato, and the steamer drew up to a quay under the ruins of Diocletian's massive palace. Here we disembarked and waited till the next steamer should call in the hope that Robinson and Jones would come by it. We had a most enjoyable time in this interesting old city, and made many friends among the pleasant young officers of the Hungarian garrison, and among the Italian merchants and professional men.

The Italians seemed to get on well with the Hungarians, and the Hungarian officers were gentlemen, having none of the overbearing caddishness of the Prussian. But the Italians had the *Italia Irridenta* principles at heart and mostly kept to themselves, having their own cafés and places of amusement. As for the Morlaks, the Slav peasants who used to come in from the interior with their produce, these dirty but picturesque people seemed happy enough; they had been very well treated by the parental Austrian Government, but they were despised by both Hungarians and Italians. I have visited the Balkans several times since those days and I find that my first impression of the Morlaks and the races akin to them remains the same. They are not civilized though they have acquired some of the vices of civilization. They are not fit to rule themselves, and the Italian coast population, descended from the Venetians, and ever reminded of the great traditions of Venice by their stately monuments and churches, a people as highly civilized as

any in Europe, certainly seem to me, now that Austrian rule is broken, the fit race to rule a broad belt along the Adriatic coast.

We waited in vain for our friends and the season was advancing, so we took the next coasting steamer to Cattaro. The old fortress and port are backed by a precipitous mountain, and on the ridge of this, four thousand feet above the sea, is the frontier between Austria and Montenegrin territory. An extraordinary frontier indeed, and one can almost throw a stone from Montenegro across Cattaro into the Adriatic.

A good story was told in those days illustrative of the geographical knowledge of the members of the Congress who, in Berlin, were settling the terms of peace between Russia and Turkey. So narrow is the belt of Austrian territory near Cattaro that to one who glances in a cursory manner at an ordinary map, Cattaro appears to be in Turkish territory. An English representative in Berlin, conversing with a Turkish representative, said :

" This little Montenegrin difficulty must be settled. They want a seaport. I have been studying a map ; now, why not give them Cattaro."

" We have no objection to that," replied the Turk with a smile.

The Englishman was delighted. He went straight to his Austrian colleague.

" The Montenegrin question is settled," he exclaimed, " all is smooth now, the Turks have given in."

" I am indeed glad to hear that," said the other. " What is proposed ? "

The amusement of the Austrian can be imagined when he heard that the Turks had no objection to giving up an Austrian fortress to Prince Nikita.

Montenegro had fought well for Russia, so the Congress of Berlin, considering that the prowess of her armies merited some recompense at the expense of Turkey, gave her what she had so long coveted—access to the sea—the seaport Antivari. They also handed over to her Podgoritsa and the territory round it. So far well. But they also gave Montenegro Gussinje and its district, at the head of the valley of the Lim, on the further side of the watershed between the rivers that flow into the Adriatic and those

that find their way to the Black Sea by way of the Danube. On the ridge of the forest-clad mountains behind Gussinje Albania, Bosnia and Montenegro join.

To thus extend Prince Nikita's territory beyond the mountains—a natural frontier—must have been the mistake of statesmen who knew little of the country or its people. It could not have been the idea of some precursor of Mr. Wilson, obsessed with the dogma of self-determination ; for the district of Gussinje was exclusively inhabited by Mussulmans of the most fanatical type who hated the followers of the Greek Church and whose idea of self-determination was to keep out the Montenegrins at any cost. It was certain that trouble would ensue from the decision at Berlin, and it did. A large force of Mussulmans—Albanians, refugee Bosnians, and deserters from the Turkish army—were now holding Gussinje, determined not to surrender it ; and outside it was a still larger Montenegrin army awaiting the signal to attack. Hence Captain Burton's warning to us as to a war that would open before the close of autumn.

After waiting for the next boat and finding on it no Robinson or Jones, we decided to push on to Montenegro, so hiring a horse to carry our saddle bags and a small Morlak boy to lead him, we clambered up the steep zigzag path ; in six hours we reached the top of the ridge, and crossing a poorly cultivated plain, came to Cettinje, the capital of the Black Mountain. Cettinje in those days was but a village of huts forming a square with a well in the middle of it. Behind it was the unpretentious palace of the Prince and the Bishop's abode, with the cathedral. In the background, on the top of a little peak, stood the tower on which the heads of slain Turks were wont to be stuck on spikes. And behind all rose the gloomy mountains of over eight thousand feet in height. There was one little inn in the place belonging to the Prince, and here we sat down to dinner with certain notables—the court painter, the Secretary of State, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, and the Prince's Adjutant, who was a cousin of his. Like all the men we saw in the capital, these grandees were in the handsome Montenegrin dress and their belts bristled with *yataghans* and pistols.

There was one inferior billiard table in the hotel, on which, after dinner, the Minister of Finance, the Prince's cousin, the innkeeper, the pot-boy and ourselves played for pots of Austrian beer.

The conversation turned on politics. Mr. Gladstone, of course, was their hero, and they frequently quoted his utterances. They hated Disraeli. We gathered that the Montenegrins, petted by Europe, and swollen with pride, nourished great dreams of aggrandisement at the expense of Turkey. They told us that their present beloved Prince had abolished many of the more barbarous customs which had grown up after five centuries of irregular war with the Turks. The Montenegrins now gave quarter in war to their enemies; Turkish heads were no longer bought at so much a head, even in times of nominal peace, to be exhibited on the Tower. But both Albanians and Montenegrins when they strayed into each others territory were liable to have their ears and noses cut off by their enemies, as was proved by the many examples of these mutilations which we saw in both countries.

In Montenegro one felt that one had left Europe behind one. Every man was armed to the teeth if he were only going from one house to another. In hard winters when the track to Cattaro became dangerous, murderers and other criminals were taken out of prison to act as postmen and carry letters down the mountains, as it would be a pity to risk the life of an honest man; there was no fear entertained that, having regained their liberty, these prisoners would stay away for good, for they would not feel safe in a foreign land. The Prince had an idea of bringing Montenegro up to his standard of civilization. They told me that he wanted to introduce that keystone of a modern state—a National Debt; but the difficulty of negotiating a loan in a European capital lay in the fact that there was nothing to hypothecate in this land of stones.

In a small rough-plastered room we were shown an interesting museum of trophies taken from the Turks in the wars that have been waged between the two races for so many centuries—curious ricketty weapons of Middle Age Europe, long Albanian guns with silver-inlaid barrels, old muskets with English Tower marks,

Martini-Henry and Winchester rifles bringing one down to more recent campaigns, sabres blood-stained and broken, mountain howitzers, tattered standards, richly inlaid scimitars of some old Prince of Orient, old chain armour. In one corner hung certain trophies which were calculated to sadden the English visitor—numerous Crimean medals, English and French, taken from the breasts of our veteran allies, heroes of Kars may be, soldiers of William's.

But Albania was our objective, so after a three days' stay in Cettinje we set out for Scutari. Our baggage was strapped on the back of a sturdy little horse led by a boy of twelve, armed with *yataghan* and loaded revolver. His father came to see us off; his nose and upper lip had been cut off by the Albanians, giving him a ghastly appearance. We walked to the village of Rieka, dismissed our boy and horse and slept in the *khan* among thousands of fleas. The next morning we hired a *londra*, the flat-bottomed boat of the country and were rowed down the river by four mountaineers, dirty in themselves, but with their guns and pistols kept in beautiful condition. Before leaving Rieka a ceremony had to be observed which prevails in Montenegro and Albania, but like many other good old customs has died out in more civilized countries. Our host tucked a bottle of *raki* under his arm and, taking a glass in his hand, accompanied us to where we were to embark and then handed round the final stirrup cup. The river debouched into the great lake of Scutari, and after paddling on until darkness set in, we beached the boat, lit a fire, and bivouacked for the night; for boats are prohibited from approaching Scutari after sunset. Before dawn we were off again and after a few hours were landed at a deserted quay in Scutari. Our four boatmen scuttled away as soon as possible, for they had no desire to stay longer than was necessary on enemy's soil.

The capital of Northern Albania, backed by its old Venetian fortress and with many a minaret rising above the houses, is a picturesque but very slovenly place. As we walked through the town to the only (so-called) hotel, kept by a Greek from Janina, I noticed that there was a haggard, anxious, half-starved look in the faces of

most of the men we met, a savage fierceness in their eyes which we had not observed among the Montenegrins. They evinced no curiosity in us. None but ourselves were in European costume, but we attracted no attention. All stalked by us with the utmost indifference and every man we met, kilted Mussulman or Christian mountaineer in his tight-fitting white dress and his white scull cap, was armed to the teeth.

Albania was at that time the wildest and most lawless country in Europe ; one might almost say in any part of the world. The Turks had their garrisons in the towns but had no authority outside them, and indeed not much within, for everybody defied the law. Turkish troops dared not venture into the mountains, for if they did so they were shot down and their rifles were taken from them. When later I crossed the Clementi mountains every mountaineer I came across was armed with a Martini-Henry rifle which had been taken from a murdered Turk. The vendetta or blood feud has from time immemorial flourished in Albania. There are feuds between clans, families and individuals. In the bazaar of Scutari the meeting of two men between whom existed a blood feud generally meant the killing of one, and no one interfered. A man who was engaged in a vendetta could easily be distinguished by his watchful movements and his finger ever ready to his pistol or gun at full cock. As I learnt afterwards, nearly everyone whom I met in Albania sooner or later met with a violent death. It was regarded as a disgrace to die in one's bed, and there were no old men.

At the time of our visit, Albania was in a state of anarchy ; the soldiers, not having received pay for months, were ragged and starving and refused to obey or salute their officers. The gendarmes too, not having been paid for fourteen months, were on strike ; but the poor fellows, as one of their officers complained to me, could not convert themselves into brigands, as one has known them do in other countries in like circumstances, for the country had become so poor that there was nothing for a brigand to steal. The pay of the Pasha and high officials too was greatly in arrears and they no longer had the power to rob the people. The natives held seditious meetings

openly and unmolested in the mosques, in which rebellion against the Porte was fearlessly advocated. The situation was aggravated by the influx into the town of thousands of starving Bosnian refugees who were fleeing from the Austrian occupation of their country.

We waited at Scutari for some days and still no Robinson and Jones appeared on the scene. November was near, so we determined to trouble no more about them and to ride through Priserin and Janina before the advent of the hard Balkan winter. We bought two horses, and a friend we had made, Lieutenant Pallioka of the *gendarmerie*—a capital fellow, who was afterwards killed when serving with the Turkish contingent at Hicks Pasha's defeat in the Sudan—offered to accompany us. We gladly accepted his offer. But he came to us with a very dejected visage one day.

"I cannot go with you, friends," he said, "I had obtained leave to accompany you to Janina. But last night the Pasha sent for me and he ordered me to stay in Scutari. That is the way these Turks treat us. They give us no pay and when we do get a chance of making a little money they do their best to get in our way."

That night a ragged miserable looking soldier called on us. He carried a big lantern in his hand. Scutari, by the way, was not lit up by lamps of any sort at night, and one had to carry a lantern to find one's way down its intricate alleys. Such police as there were in the town patrolled the streets at night and arrested all who were not provided with lanterns. Burglars, of whom there were many, if they carried lamps, so far as I could make out, were not interfered with by the police.

This ragged soldier had been sent to us by the Pasha with orders that he was to command our escort on our journey. A foreigner is compelled by law to have with him an escort of *zaptiehs* when travelling in Turkey. But such an escort was worse than useless in Albania. The *zaptiehs* would certainly refuse to go off the main roads, for if they travelled into the mountains they would in all probability be murdered. Besides which they would certainly make us very unpopular in all the villages through which we passed, for they would carry out the immemorial custom of Turkish soldiers; they would

live on the country and pay for nothing that they requisitioned. We decided to ignore the law—as everyone else in Scutari was doing at that time—and dispense with the escort.

We were discussing matters in our bedroom the next morning when there came a loud knock at our door. The door opened and there stood before us, looking quite pleased with themselves, Jones and Robinson. We demanded explanations. Their delay was due to Robinson's complicated arrangements with his lawyers as to the sending of remittances to the various towns at which he purposed to halt. In each case he had to wait some days for the remittance. He was awaiting yet another remittance at Scutari. He had left the bulky tent, cooking apparatus and other impedimenta which he had considered essential to the expedition at Cettinje, and he intended to return and fetch them. He told us that the war between the Principality and Albania was now but a question of days. He and Jones had been invited to accompany the army of Prince Nikita as the honoured guests of the General in command. Now from the little we had seen of the two countries, Brown and myself entertained a decided preference for the Albanians to the Montenegrins ; we had met members of the Albanian League and our sympathies were with it. Albania, too, before we left England had been the proclaimed objective of our expedition.

After a somewhat heated discussion we agreed to march to Podgoritsa on the road to Cettinje and halt there while Robinson went on to Cettinje to collect his impedimenta, and then we would return to Scutari. We took with us a young Albanian, Marco, who spoke a few words of Italian ; with him I soon established a *lingua franca* composed of English, Italian, Slav and Albanian, and with this I got on very well. We gave the slip to our Turkish escort, and a three days' march brought us to Podgoritsa, where we found that the promised war was no nearer than ever. It seemed that the Five Great Powers, a mystical authority then held in great respect, were holding the Montenegrins back, not permitting them to attack. When I told Marco that

we were marching back to Scutari, his face broke into broad smiles.

"*Bono, signor, bono,*" he exclaimed. "*Karatag yok mir. Montenegro no bonne, no bonne!*"

He evidently did not feel comfortable among his hereditary enemies. As soon as Robinson returned from Cettinje with his impedimenta, we were off again.

The season was advancing; the bitterly cold wind was ever sweeping from the mountains, down whose slopes the snow line was daily getting lower. So I decided that I should push on and not wait any longer for my dilatory friend, who was again awaiting remittances. I had met several members of the Albanian League, and here is the gist of a conversation that I held one day with one of their leaders. He told me that the object of the League was to keep Albania for the Albanians; to defend their country against the Montenegrins or any other people who tried to steal portions of it.

He said:

"The Turks we have done with. We Albanians fought well for the Turks against the Russians, and now they have sold our country to the dogs of the Black Mountain. All that we get from them is taxation and robbery. Albania shall have her independence."

He had worked himself into a rage, so he stopped, drank some sherbet, and then turning suddenly to me said:

"What do you think of Midhat Pasha in England?"

"We look upon him as one of the few honest and able Turkish statesmen," I replied.

He seemed pleased on hearing this and said:

"We wish to create an independent Albanian Principality, possibly as the Protectorate of England, with Midhat Pasha, who is an Albanian, as our prince."

I asked him whether the League was a purely patriotic movement, or whether it was confined to Mohammedans only.

"There are as many Christians as Mussulmans in the League," he replied. "You know that the Christian mountaineers are of the Latin faith and hate the Greek Christians as much as we Mohammedans do. We have a force of thirty thousand men in Gussinje (I found

later that this was a much exaggerated statement). Why do you not go to Gussinje to see the fighting? Parties leave Scodra every night to go to the front. I will give you a letter to our General, Ali Bey. He will welcome you as a brother."

Now this was exactly what I wanted. To write from the headquarters of the League in Gussinje and explain to the British public the real state of affairs would be good work. If war broke out I could be appointed as special correspondent to a London paper. The Albanians had no one to voice their cause in England while Montenegro was the pattern principality of half the Press. My Albanian friend was quite honest in his wish that Albania should be placed under a British Protectorate, for our prestige was great in those days throughout all those regions. Next I was introduced to another leaguesman, Achmet Agha Kouchi, who proposed to go to Gussinje in a few days and would be pleased if I would accompany him. It was therefore arranged that I and Jones should ride with him, while Robinson and Brown, accompanied by Marco, should walk off and do some shooting in the foothills of the Miridite mountains. We were advised to wear the fez as this would reduce the risk of irritating the excitable Mussulmans of Gussinje.

On the morning fixed for our departure, our horses were saddled in readiness; we burdened ourselves with no baggage save a blanket each but wore double sets of underclothing in anticipation of the cold on the mountains. At last Achmet Agha turned up looking very uncomfortable. He said:

"I am sorry, but you cannot come with me. I have been told by the authorities that if anything happens to you I shall be held responsible; my house and my property will be confiscated. The Pasha bade me tell you that you are forbidden to go to Gussinje."

The man of course lied. We discovered that spies had brought into the League information as to the dealings of our companions with the Montenegrin officers.

But we had our way. That day we were introduced to the *boulim-bashi* of the Clementi tribe, a tall, handsome, pleasant-looking Albanian Mussulman, superbly dressed and armed. He told us that he would accompany

us across the mountains through the territory of the Clementi to a place not a day's march from Gussinje, where he would hand us over to the famous chief of the Clementi Nik Leka, who would take us to Ali Bey if the danger were not too great. We were delighted, for we could not travel under better auspices. The Christian highlanders, as I have explained, enjoyed an almost complete independence. Each mountain tribe elected from the Mussulmans of Scutari a representative landowner, the *boulim-bashi*, who acted as a sort of consul and mediated between the tribe and the Turkish Government in case of a dispute. The *boulim-bashi* being chosen by the highlanders was always popular with them.

The Clementi was the most powerful mountain tribe in Northern Albania. There were six thousand fighting men in it, all armed with Martini-Henry rifles stolen from the Turks. The Clementi, being Roman Catholic Christians, were hesitating as to whether they should join the Albanian League or not, and in the meanwhile some of the more lawless of the tribesmen were adopting a policy of benevolent neutrality, that is, they attacked small parties of either side who traversed their territory, cut their throats and deprived them of their weapons. Their chieftain, Nik Leka, was the hero of the Scutarine Christians. It was to the armed warlike mountaineers that the unarmed timid townsmen of the Latin faith looked for protection, and many were the tales told of Nik Leka's prowess in the bazaar of Scutari when his *yataghan* quickly avenged any insult to men of his faith. On a recent occasion he had slain three men in the bazaar, put their heads in a sack and marched off with them, unmolested to his mountains.

Early one morning we rode out of Scutari ; a strong *bora* was blowing and the snow lay low on the mountains. The *boulim-bashi* had thrown off the dress of the town with its ample festinelle and rich linen and had donned the simpler costume of the Arnaut chieftain. His cartridge cases betokened the man of rank, being of gold beautifully worked, as were the handles of his pistols in his variegated silken sash. We cantered across the plain until we reached the foot of the mountains. Then for seven hours we were almost constantly ascending.

The track was very bad and we had often to dismount to haul our horses over some difficult bit. At times we rode along a two-foot broad path with a wall of rock on one side and a precipice a thousand feet in depth on the other. It was a road along which men could only travel in single file and those we met on the way had often to go back for some distance so as to reach a more open space where it was possible for us to pass them. Every man cordially welcomed the *boulim-bashi*, and not one of them but carried a Martini-Henry and a belt full of cartridges.

It was very dark when we heard that welcome sound to travellers, the baying of dogs. We dismounted; suddenly a door opened and a blaze of light fell on us. A gigantic mountaineer, gun in hand, came out suspiciously. He at once recognized our companion, most heartily welcomed us, and extended to us the hospitality of his house. In the centre of the clay floor of the hut was a fire of big logs, and light was afforded by an iron cup hanging from the roof into which burning chips of wood were occasionally thrown. The rough stone walls were hung with weapons. There were several women and very pretty and jolly children in the hut. We enjoyed an excellent dinner of mutton *kybobs*, washed down with thick *mead* and *raki*.

At this great elevation it was bitterly cold when we started the next morning at dawn, and light snow was falling. We rode till sunset over the bleak mountains, and at last we came to where the mountain side was rent by a profound ravine. There were places where the precipices ran down sheer for quite four thousand feet. We skirted the edge of this ravine for some way. Far below us we heard the roar of a great torrent, but a purple haze lay at the bottom of the gorge and concealed the foaming waters. This ravine formed the frontier of Albania and Montenegro, and a very scientific frontier it was. We had to make a perilous descent from the mountain to the bottom of the ravine. Even our mountain horses trembled with nervousness when we led them across the more nasty bits. At the bottom, hard by the torrent, we came to the village of Clementi, consisting of three or four huts, one of which was the house of

Nik Leka. We were at last in the stronghold of the famous chieftain.

Nik Leka was away, but we were received with the usual hearty Albanian greetings by his handsome brother. The hut had but a single room, like the one at which we had spent the previous night. Then, to our astonishment, there hustled into the hut a jolly looking Franciscan friar who shook us cordially by the hands and implored us to come to the mission house which was hard by.

"What joy to see Europeans up in our wilderness," he exclaimed. " You must be our guests."

The mission was a small but comfortable house with a little church adjoining it. At the mission were four Italian Franciscan Fathers, all as jolly as the first whom we had met, Father John. Never did travellers fall into better hands. My Italian was somewhat weak, so I conversed with them in dog Latin, with an Italian word thrown in here and there, and in this tongue we got on very well. When they heard that we were going to Gussinje, they tried to dissuade us, for they said that meant almost certain death. They told us that ten thousand Montenegrins with artillery were encamped in a strong position within two hours' march of Gussinje. Nik Leka had been invited by Ali Bey to go to Gussinje three days before and had not yet returned. Ali Bey desired an alliance with the Clementi, " but," said the missionaries, " though Nik Leka will talk with Ali Bey as much as he likes, Nik Leka will never fight for the League. He may promise to allow bands of men to travel unmolested through these mountains, but that is all. The Clementi hate the Montenegrins and the Mussulmans alike."

The Fathers spoke very highly of the Christian highlanders.

" Ah, they have many virtues ; they are good fathers, good husbands, kind to each other, truthful, hospitable, not treacherous, but," added Father John with a sigh, " they are such savages, so utterly indifferent to human life. This cruel vendetta of theirs is horrible ; there are no really old men. Every man is murdered sooner or later. It is thus they wish to die."

The missionaries agreed to write for us a letter in Albanian to Ali Bey, and Nik Leka's brother carried it off to Gussinje that night. The next morning we bade farewell to our friend the *boulim-bashi*, who returned to Scutari, and we rode off to a hut called Gropa, a few hours off. The snow began to fall heavily and it froze sharply. We came to Gropa, which is but a one-roomed hut on the mountain side, occupied by a man and his family. It overlooked the plain on which Gussinje lies, and it is only a two hours' walk from that place. Here we waited for our reply to our letter to Ali Bey, and we slept at the hut for that night.

CHAPTER V

Our heads in danger.—The Franciscan monks.—A Homeric repast.—Home.—A plausible friend.—Am challenged to fight a duel.—An ocean cruise proposed.—I buy the *Falcon*.—An amateur crew.—The *ne exeat regno*.—Off at last.

EARLY next morning Father John suddenly made his appearance looking alarmed and anxious. " Nik Leka's brother has brought me Ali Bey's reply to the letter. Here it is ; I will translate it to you. He writes thus :

" To Father John, greeting.

" We have read. We have understood. The chiefs have assembled and this is their decision. If these people will be hostages and will guarantee that Marco Milano (the Montenegrin General) will withdraw the Karatag troops within three days from before Gussinje, let them come here. If they cannot do this, they had better not come."

" Of course you cannot go," said Father John. " Nik Leka's brother has also brought this news from Gussinje : When they heard of your arrival some of the men said : ' We have heard of these people. They have been to Podgoritza. They are friends of the Montenegrin chiefs; they must be spies ; one is a red bearded Russian (Jones).' Then thirty men decided to leave Gussinje last night and to surprise and murder you in this hut. Ali Bey heard of the plan and stopped it. Nik Leka's brother says that you had better not stay here, for the people of Gussinje are violently excited about you. They thirst for your blood."

We were sitting down to breakfast and discussing this disquieting information. Our backs were turned to the open door when I heard a noise outside and the next moment I saw the Franciscan drop the meat he was holding and turn very pale, as did the woman of the house who was nursing a baby. I looked round and saw two of the defenders of Gussinje, one a Bosnian, enter the hut. They held their pistols at full cock, and their fierce eyes wandered anxiously round the room. According to the universal custom of the country, on our arrival

we had handed our rifles and revolvers to our host, who had hung them on the wall by the side of his own weapons. I saw that there were some other armed Mohammedans outside the hut.

" We are envoys of Ali Bey," said one of the men. Then he proceeded as the Franciscan translated. " Ali Bey will see these men, but he does not wish them to enter the town, for he cannot rely on his men, who may do some evil to them. Ali Bey and some chiefs will therefore meet them outside the town."

" Do not go," whispered the Franciscan ; " they lie ; there is some treachery. But parley with them. We want time."

I asked them whether they had brought a letter from Ali Bey ; they had not. Then they talked eagerly to our host and the Franciscan put what they said in dog Latin. " They say that you are Russian spies, and they are endeavouring to arouse our host's suspicions of you. *O amici multum est periculum pro vobis.*"

At last one of them turned fiercely to our host. " By Allah we assure you that these are spies. We have twenty friends in the hills behind and since these men will not come with us we will kill them here ; now is the time."

Father John, with pale face, translated " *Ille homo dixit ad alium nunc est tempus intercidere illos homines.*"

But our host, satisfied with our explanations, was evidently not to be persuaded that we were Russian spies, and he spoke with quiet dignity.

" These are not Russians, but Englishmen, and are our friends. Remember that many of our tribe have seen you approach. You had better go back in peace else you will never get back at all."

Then we heard a rifle shot close by, the signal that the mountaineers were arriving on the scene. We saw that at once the strained look on the faces of our host and hostess had disappeared. The men from Gussinje looked at each other in silence, swallowed their coffee, and sulkily left the hut. We took our revolvers and went outside. We noticed that several of our friends, white clad, skull-capped Arnauts, were on the slopes commanding the pass, watching the envoys as they clambered down.

As it was now evident that the people of Gussinje were not very anxious to entertain us, there was nothing left to us but to return to Scutari. We rode back to the mission house at Clementi and shortly afterwards Nik Leka stalked in. He was big and handsome, a splendid specimen of a barbarian warrior. His expression was that of genial good nature, but there was a fierce light in his eyes that spoke of ruthlessness to his enemies. He told us that we could not have entered Gussinje. He himself had been in danger among the fanatical inhabitants and he had been obliged to escape to save his life.

" They are like madmen there now," he said, " starving and desperate."

We spent a very jolly evening over the log fire, drinking the Fathers' wine and *raki*. I rose very high in the estimation of Nik Leka when he heard that it was in Latin that I conversed with the Fathers. He would look at me thoughtfully for awhile, then suddenly jump up, shake me violently by the hand and cry, " *Mik, mik*, you are my friend," and then burst out laughing.

The next morning we bade farewell to the jolly Franciscans, who evidently do a great deal of good work in the mountains, and are beloved by the tribesmen who to a man would die for them. They are all skilled doctors, and have a large practice in dealing with knife and bullet wounds. The genial Nik Leka was going to Scutari, so we had him as a companion on the return journey. He carried with him two long pistols at full cock and a Martini-Henry rifle—all the baggage that the chieftain required when bound on a two days' visit to the capital.

We passed the night at the same hut in which we had slept on our outward journey. The people expected us and gave us a splendid welcome in the ancient Albanian fashion. Nik Leka told them our story. Our pretty hostess put her hand to her throat, drew it backwards and forwards, laughed merrily, and shook hands with us, and speaking broken Albanian so that we might understand her said, " *Gussinje yok mir Clementi mir*." A lot of neighbours came in and all was good natured merriment. I have never met a jollier people than these simple mountaineers. A huge fire was made on the floor

in the middle of the room ; the pungent smoke from the green wood was very trying to unaccustomed eyes.

Our host went out and killed a fatted sheep, the entrails were taken out, the carcass was sewn up again, a wooden spit was passed through the sheep. It was then placed over the fire and one of the women turned the spit with her hand. A huge loaf of maize bread was placed in the embers to bake. We and the other men squatted round the fire and the women in accordance with Eastern custom, waited until we had finished our food, when it would be their turn to take their share of the feast. First we ate *patoulis*, a heavy dripping cake smeared thickly with honey and lumps of goats' milk cheese. Then we fell on the *misch i pikun* as the roasted sheep is called. From this our host would cut off great lumps with his *yataghan*, and these we devoured with our fingers. He treated us as honoured guests, and occasionally would take up a kidney or other tit-bit and place it in our mouths. We washed all this down with *raki* and *mead*.

Two days later we got to Scutari and bade farewell to our good friend, Nik Leka, who, I learnt, met his fate a year or two after this ; he was killed in a blood feud. We found that Robinson and Brown had returned from their sporting trip, and Robinson of course was still waiting for remittances. The Pasha, who had tried to force his escort of *zaptiehs* on us, had died in our absence. It seems that immediately after drinking a cup of coffee he complained of intense internal pains and in ten minutes he was no more. No one in Scutari doubted that poison was the cause of his sudden decease. Well, our expedition had been a failure and this was mainly due to the divided councils of our party and the financial arrangements made by Robinson, which had delayed us until the winter had come upon us to prevent further travel.

So we marched to the little Albanian seaport of Dulcigno and took the Austrian-Lloyd steamer back to Trieste. There were further delays over Robinson's remittances when we got to Paris, so Brown and myself having only enough money to take us home, left our two companions there, and within a few hours were in London.

Hostilities never broke out after all between the Albanian League and Montenegro, for the Great Powers arranged that Turkey should retain Gussinje and that the Black Mountain should receive some other territory in exchange. The Albanians did not succeed in achieving their independence, and did not elect Midhat Pasha as their Prince, for the Sultan Abdul Hamid, jealous of Midhat's influence and ability, exiled him to some remote place in Asia and there had him secretly murdered. As a proof of his death, his head was sent to the Yildez Palace in a casket.

We travelled home through a snow-covered Europe, for it was one of the bitterest winters on record. On returning to the Temple I wrote my book, " Albania and Montenegro," illustrated by myself, which was published by Sampson Low. It was my first book, and has long since been out of print ; but it started me on my writing career. I disliked the work of a lawyer and soon gave it up in disgust and took up free lance journalism, writing articles on divers matters in various papers and magazines.

I must have been very green and innocent in those days. I had a confidence in human nature and could not believe that there was guile in anyone until he had revealed his true character, and then I had no mercy. In the mixed Bohemianism of Fleet Street, I made the acquaintance of several plausible " friends " who attached themselves to me as being an easy prey. Of course I lent more money than I could afford to people who brought me false tales of woe. Partnership in various promising enterprises was put before me. Thus there befell me the following adventure to which I can now look back with amusement.

A certain retired major in a cavalry regiment who had become a well-known writer on military subjects and was regularly employed by a leading paper, persuaded me to join him in the production of a weekly paper of a bright character. He said that it could be done at a ridiculous cost—a few hundreds only, and it would pay from the first week. We found a printer who was ready to print and publish the magazine for us, and he let us have one of his rooms as our office. My friend, the

major, who according to himself was intimately acquainted with all the literary people of eminence, told me that many of these had volunteered to send us contributions which were not to be paid for until our magazine had proved itself a success from the money point of view. Of these he gave me a written list.

I must have been a " mug " to believe all this ; but he was extraordinarily plausible, and even quoted to me the encouraging letters which, according to him, he had received from distinguished authors. But it happened that among the generous contributors he mentioned the name of a man whom I knew. Accidently, on meeting this man, I alluded to the subject. He said that he did not know the major. I enquired from other promised contributors and discovered that I had been lied to in a wholesale manner. I wrote to the major, explaining matters, and telling him that I should have nothing more to do with him ; then I went about paying debts connected with the paper—happily these were few—and closed all accounts. The protesting major followed me through the streets while I was doing this, and as I was going into the printer's shop he held on to my coat to retain me. I freed myself and while I did so he happened to fall into the gutter.

And now he proved more lunatic than knave for he proclaimed throughout Fleet Street that I had knocked him down, and he was persuaded by some who wished to pull his leg that it was his duty as a soldier to call me out. One morning in the Temple a gentleman, a journalist, called upon me and told me with a solemn face that he had come as the major's second. " Would I fight or apologize ? " I could see that he was enjoying the joke.

" Certainly," I replied, " I will fight and as the challenged I choose pistols."

I brought from the mantelpiece a beautiful pair of duelling pistols that had belonged to my father, and suggested that these would do very well for the purpose. On the following day the second came again.

" The major," he explained, " cannot fight you with pistols for he has heard "—through the inventive leg-pullers I suppose—"that you are a dead shot, and also an expert swordsman. It would be murder."

Then I proposed that we should fight with scythes as that was a weapon that probably neither of us had ever before used in a duel, and mow each other down. The second shook his head; then I suggested steam rollers. And so as to keep the matter quiet and to save expense I offered to sail the major and the two seconds across the Channel in the *Ripple*. We would go to the bay of the Seine, for there we could fight undisturbed on a sandy island at low water and afterwards deposit the corpse of the defeated one in a quicksand. On the following day I received a queer epistle from the major which convinced me that the poor fellow was certainly losing his reason. It ran as follows:

> "On second thoughts I don't see that it would be fair of me to fight you. Who are you? A nobody; whereas I am certainly of great use to my country. My time is worth fifteen pounds a week to the Conservative cause. Optimistic exaggeration in my cups is your pretext for suddenly breaking with me. You have made me ridiculous in Fleet Street. But believe me, I shall find another way of punishing you."

How he carried out his threat will be seen later.

In my book, "The Cruise of the *Falcon*," I explain in the following words how that long voyage came about:

"One fine day in June (shortly after the above episode) my friend, Arthur Jerdein—an ex-officer of the Royal Mail Company—and myself, urged by the glory of the weather, walked away from the narrow city streets and took the steamboat at the Temple Stairs for the ancient port of Greenwich—a favourite trip of both of us this, but one that never wearied and seemed ever new. To come out of the confined city and to steam through the fresh breeze down the grand old river, among the big ocean-going ships, by the stately store-houses and quaint water-side wharves and slips, has a peculiar fascination of its own with its manifold suggestions of enterprise in many a strange land and sea. We enjoyed the orthodox fish dinner, had another stroll through the models of antique ships of war and relics of many victories in the hospital, and then lingered, lazily smoking, on the sea

platform of the palace, as we waited for the boat to take us back to the unquiet town.

"It was indeed a lovely evening—a Thames-side evening as Turner loved to paint, with just that suspicion of haze in the golden atmosphere to tone down all hardness of outline and crudity of colour, and glorify all. And the sunset was a picture of snowy ranges, turquoise blue seas, golden sandy wastes and pink and purple headlands, mysterious and infinitely far away, that seemed to call one to voyages into the unknown. We looked out on the waters, saw the barges dropping down on the tide, their red sails gleaming like old gold in the western light. A big vessel passed us—an Australian clipper—crowded with emigrants who raised a farewell cheer as the last shore boats left her side. A smart yawl yacht of about sixty tons lay at anchor close in front of us. We looked on all this, silent for a time, but our thoughts were very similar, the surroundings influenced us in like manner. In all the restless air moved the spirit of travel and adventure. Each sound of chain rattling through hawse pipe, each smell of tar and odorous foreign wood, each sight was full of reminiscences of far lands, warm seas, and islands of spice. All seemed to say, 'Go out on the free seas.'

"So far, this summer, various causes had kept me in London so I was more than usually thirsting after change from city life—and lo, there was already an autumnal beauty in the sky; it would soon be too late—a summer wasted; all these months of glorious sunshine—winter was near. The weariness of the city, the sigh of the wind, the surroundings of travel, all combined to wake a restlessness and a regret in me; so too was it with my friend, for when one of us awoke from the reverie and spoke, the conversation was on that of which our hearts were full. We admired the beautiful yacht lying at anchor.

"'How well,' one said, 'to set to work now and fit out with all stores a vessel like that, and with a few good friends sail right away from the coming northern winter—right away for a year or two into summer seas.'

"Though before leaving London the faintest shadow of such a plan had not fallen on our minds—we decided

to follow this impulse, and at the very idea of what we were about to do, all our discontent vanished like smoke and a most joyous enthusiasm succeeded it."

Thus it was that the cruise of the *Falcon* came about and that we sailed away on a voyage that extended over a period of nearly two years, and in the course of which we travelled roughly twenty-two thousand miles.

By many, ocean-cruising in a yacht is regarded as the amusement of the rich man. It is nothing of the sort, and indeed it may be said that the richer one is the less enjoyment one gets out of it. I can see before me one of the newly-rich, for example, who has bought a palatial steam yacht from a newly-poor at fabulous cost, because he thinks that it is the thing to do. He is as miserable in her at sea as if he were a convict in Portland. He has to do exactly what his officers and crew order him to do, for he knows nothing of sea ways, he has to submit to insolence; knows that he is regularly cheated, and is always, on the slightest provocation, lying down sea-sick in his luxurious cabin. Now when one can dispense with paid hands, when three or four men who know something about the sea join together to go cruising, they will find this one of the cheapest amusements. The cruise of the *Falcon* cost us little. In those days yachts paid no harbour dues; housekeeping is much cheaper afloat than it is on shore; and the initial expense, that of buying and fitting out a boat, could be managed then for a moderate sum.

So Jerdein and myself set to work at once. John Picket of Southampton, who had built the *Ripple* for me, had exactly the boat that would suit us, the *Falcon*, a yawl of eighteen tons register, and twenty-eight tons yacht measurement, square-sterned, with a length of forty-two, a beam of thirteen, and a draught of seven and a half feet. We procured all the necessary charts, directories, nautical instruments, stored away some nine months' provisions, decorated the main cabin walls with arms for defence and sport—Martini-Henry rifles, cutlasses and revolvers—and purchased a small swivel gun, with grape and canister. We chose our volunteer crew, two briefless barristers, Andrews, who had been with me at Westminster School, and Arnaut, a French

Mauritian. Neither of these professed to know anything about sailing. We added another member to our crew, the only paid hand, a half starving little wretch who was loafing about West Quay in search of a job. He was on no watch, and used to turn in at night. In the day time he did the cooking, cleaned lamps and brasswork and dishes and so forth, and only steered now and again—especially when we four sat down to table together. We kept four-hour watches, watch and watch, in the usual way, with dog watches from four p.m. to eight a.m. I was the captain, Jerdein the mate. Jerdein was the officer of the port watch, I of the starboard. Andrews was on Jerdein's watch, Arnaut on mine. Jerdein and myself had to do all the steering between us in bad weather.

Our immediate plan was to sail by easy stages to Buenos Ayres, and then navigate the great tributaries of the river Plate, the Parana and Paraguay, as high as we could. We had heard much of the glories of those huge streams and the abundant sport to be found on their wild banks. No yacht had ascended these rivers before, and we anticipated exciting adventures in those unexplored regions.

Our preparations were all but completed and my crew were all on board. I ran up to town for the last time in order to purchase a few articles, including a lightning conductor, a very necessary accessory, for the electric disturbances in the valley of the river Plate are said to be more frequent and more dangerous than in any other part of the world, and every small coasting schooner and river craft carries its lightning conductor from its mast head. When I returned to the *Falcon* I found that strange things had happened in my absence. There was a trembling solicitor's clerk on board who had called to see me on business. His nervous manner aroused the suspicions of my crew, and when they discovered that he had come to serve a writ on me, they played such tricks on him that he thought that he had tumbled upon a nest of pirates. He was in fear of his life, for when I arrived on the scene the crew were discussing the advisability of throwing him overboard, and he was volubly explaining that he could not swim. To the man's relief I accepted the writ and put him on shore.

I perused the legal looking document and found that a writ of *ne exeat regno* had been taken out against me at the instance of the mad major who had challenged me to fight a duel. A *ne exeat regno* is issued on the *ex parte* affidavit of the applicant, who has to state on oath that the defendant is about to fly the country so as to avoid proceedings that are being taken against him. The writ gives authority for the arrest of the defendant so as to prevent his escape. Thus by swearing to a false affidavit had the vindictive major attempted to stop the departure of the *Falcon*. I hurried to town and took immediate steps to have the writ set aside. I found that the major had sworn that I was in debt to a great many tradesmen, that I was leaving England in the *Falcon* to avoid my creditors, and that among other things I owed him a year's salary—five hundred pounds—as editor of the new paper, according to the terms of an agreement in his possession.

So as to avoid arrest while the matter was proceeding, I lived in a barrister's chambers in Lincoln's Inn, close to my lawyers and to the Master's Chambers, in which the case was to be tried. I swore an affidavit that I was not in debt to anyone, and had entered into no agreement with the major as to salary. Called upon to support his affidavit, the major failed to produce any creditor of mine and alleged that he had mislaid the agreement. The Master in Chambers said that the *ne exeat* ought never to have been granted and he at once set it aside. He also said that it was absurd to suppose that anyone in order to avoid his creditors would attempt to escape to South America in an eighteen ton boat. He himself was going on a cruise that long vacation in a yacht of about that size. He hoped to get as far as Penzance ; he much doubted that we should get any further.

So I returned to my crew who were very impatient over the long delay, which threatened to carry us on into the season of the Equinoxial gales, and it was important that, with my, so far, very inexperienced hands, I should get clear away from narrow waters before the advent of heavy weather. At four o'clock in the afternoon on the 20th of August, 1880, the sails were hoisted,

up came the anchor, and lustily cheered by the people collected at West Quay and by the crews of the anchored yachts, we sailed down Southampton Water, through the Needles, and so down Channel. The last we saw of old England was the Lizard Lights gleaming through the darkness, and from these we took our " departure " and steered straight across the Bay of Biscay for Finisterre and Madeira. We were off at last !

CHAPTER VI

The cruise of the *Falcon*.—Across the Trades.—The Doldrums.—A submarine volcano.—The Brazils.—The river Plate.—A ride across the Continent.—The Pampas.—The salt desert.—Back to Buenos Ayres.

THEN for me, before I settled down to war-correspondentship, there came several years of ocean cruising—the two years' voyage of the *Falcon*, the two successive summers of sailing up and down the Baltic in my three-tonner the *Falcon II*, the voyage of the *Alerte* to Trinidada in search of buried treasure, that of the *Sanspeur* to the West Indies, and my journey down the coast of Florida in an open boat. Of these voyages, three have been fully described in my books " The Cruise of the *Falcon*," " The *Falcon* on the Baltic," and " The Cruise of the *Alerte*," published by Longmans and Green ; so in this book I will not dwell much on our experiences at sea, or on descriptions of the cities and scenery we saw, but rather on amusing incidents on shore, meetings with queer people, and matters which at that time it would not have been expedient to mention in a book.

Fortunately we had fine weather all the way to Madeira and by that time we had got the crew fairly shipshape. What they were like at the beginning will be shown by the following incident. I quote from the " The Cruise of the *Falcon* " :

> On one fine day, the wind being steady, light and right aft, our spinnaker and topsail set, Arnaut was left alone on deck for a few minutes to steer. Suddenly I heard a great flapping of canvas, and on hurrying on deck, perceived that all our sails had been taken aback.
>
> The mainsail, topsail and spinnaker were bellying out the wrong way, and the vessel was slowly travelling stern first. The booms, being guyed, had not swung aft. I looked at the compass, and perceived that Arnaut had steered the vessel right round, so that she was heading away from her right course ; then I looked at the culprit. He was sitting, with his legs crossed Turkish

fashion, on the locker aft—placid, calm as an Indian idol. He was deliberately rolling himself another cigarette, the while professing to be steering with his elbow, and evidently unconscious of having done aught wrong.

" Well, Arnaut ? " I said.

" I think," he remarked in a weary, careless voice, looking at the burgee at the masthead : " I think the wind has changed."

Andrews caused Jerdein, the officer of his watch, as much trouble as Arnaut did me. Often at night, when Jerdein and Andrews were on deck, I have been awakened by a tremendous row, a banging about of ropes, and, far louder than all, the stentorian exclamations of the wrathful Jerdein, showing that Andrews had got rather mixed up among the " strings."

We carried the north-east wind right across the Bay and so on to Madeira. We lay at anchor off Funchal for a week, and then sailed to the Cape Verde Islands, a little over a thousand miles further south. And now, running before the strong north-east trade winds, we found that the old *Falcon*, though jury-rigged, had plenty of speed. Rolling and heaving gently as the great seas passed under her, she used to reel off her eight and sometimes nine knots an hour before the steady breeze. Running down the " trades " over those seas of perpetual summer, where only occasionally the monotony of the fine weather was interrupted by a moderate gale, was a delightful experience to one whose previous cruising had been done on stormier northern waters.

In those days fine square-rigged ships were a much commoner feature on the ocean routes than they are now. Thus on one day during this voyage four full-rigged ships were in sight of us. One passed close to us. She was sailing quite twelve knots an hour with all canvas set, including stunsails, a beautiful sight. We spoke her and found she was the well-known fast clipper the *Paramatta* of 1521 tons, bound from Plymouth to Sydney with a large number of emigrants on board. It is long since they built vessels like her in England. We came to an anchor in Porto Grande, St. Vincent, a desolate cinder heap of an extinct volcano, that is one of the chief

stations of the Anglo-Brazilian Telegraph Company, and right hospitably were we treated by the young English telegraphists who have to live on this uninviting spot.

From the Cape Verdes we had rather a troublesome voyage across the Atlantic to Bahia in Brazil, for, before we reached the ocean tracts that are swept by the pleasant south-east trade winds, we had to traverse the region of the oppressively-hot South-west African monsoon, which blew hard right in our teeth, bringing with it frequent heavy squalls, torrents of tropical rain and a confused sea; and then to drift through the dreaded Doldrums the region of unbearable calms about the line, where a sailing vessel may lie for weeks on the hot smooth water, with the pitch oozing out of her decks, unable to move.

One day, just as we had crossed the equator, we passed through a large patch of discoloured water with a violently disturbed sea breaking over it. It had exactly the appearance of shoal water, but we knew that there was no less depth than two thousand fathoms anywhere in this neighbourhood. It must have puzzled the mariner of the old days, when on getting into one of these patches he hove the lead and found no soundings. This is marked on the chart as the volcanic region of the Atlantic. For submarine earthquakes are now acknowledged to be the cause of these manifestations of suboceanic disturbance. On sailing over the same ground in the *Alerte* eight years later, I had a similar experience.

At last, on the twenty-second day out from Porto Grande, we sailed into the smooth waters of the beautiful Bay of Bahia, after a voyage of over two thousand five hundred sea miles. We made several excursions in the *Falcon* and in our boats up the rivers that pour into this great bay, and I for the first time realized the magnificence of the vegetation of tropical Brazil, of which to attempt description would be vain. In Bahia one was not permitted to go off, or on, one's vessel, if she was a merchantman, after 8 p.m., and a negro guard was placed on board the vessel to be fed and lodged during the stay. I believe that the object of these precautions was to prevent runaway slaves from taking refuge on neutral ships, for in those days slavery was still an institution in Brazil. However,

these rules did not apply to us, for we flew the blue ensign and were granted men-of-war privileges. We were given permission to land at any time with out boats at the naval landing stage at the arsenal.

From Bahia we sailed to Rio de Janeiro, where we stayed for several weeks, cruising about the spacious bay with friends or making excursions into the interior. The large English steam yacht *Wanderer* was in the harbour during our stay and we saw a good deal of her owner Mr. Lambert. We were unfortunately up-country when Dom Pedro, the Emperor of Brazil, came off to visit us in the *Wanderer's* launch. The Emperor steamed round us and remarked that we must be very uncomfortable and very foolish to wander about the ocean in such a cockle shell. If I were an emperor I think I should have been of the same opinion, and have preferred something bigger than the *Falcon*, if I had cruised at all ; but after all would it be so enjoyable ; maybe not.

From Rio we sailed to the River Plate, calling at Maldonado and Montevideo on our way. In those days Buenos Ayres did not have the splendid harbour and docks it possesses now. Where the vast alluvial plains of the Pampas terminate in the sea the incline is very gradual. Thus the mail steamers and the big ships had to anchor almost out of sight of land, and merchandise had to be transhipped three times between the vessel, fourteen miles out in the outer roads, and the railway trucks on shore—from vessel to lighter, from lighter to carts drawn by amphibious horses, and so to the railway. Even in a boat of shallow draught one had to anchor far away from the mole in what was practically an open roadstead, quite open to the Atlantic on the south-east. But to the north of Buenos Ayres and about ten miles from it is the River Lujan, one of the many channels of the intricate delta of the River Plate.

On the Rio Tigre, a branch of the Lujan, is the boat-house of the English rowing club, and we decided to take the *Falcon* to that quiet spot. As we approached the mouth of the Lujan, the water gradually shoaled till at last we had no more than seven feet under us, but we sailed on hoping to drive her through the soft mud and across the bar. Bump, bump, she went before the strong

wind, with all canvas set. Finally she stuck fast, and the sail was taken off her.

There is little tide in the estuary of the Plate, and the height of the water depends on whether the wind be on or off shore. Thus the south-east wind blowing into the estuary from seawards causes the waters of the Plate to rise rapidly, for it prevents the river currents from proceeding out to the ocean. We had a very unpleasant and anxious night of it, for the wind veering to the south-east freshened to a gale which, blowing straight in from the ocean, put us on an ugly lee shore, and raised a nasty sea. We put two anchors out and rode to them, rolling heavily, bumping hard on the bottom and taking seas right over us. Fortunately it was good holding ground under us and we had good ground tackle to hold on by, or our fate might have been that of two schooners that drove on shore and broke up that night. During the night the water, piled up by the wind, rose two feet. Then we only struck the bottom at long intervals after some higher wave than usual had passed us. At dawn we were able to hoist a little sail, weighed anchor, bumped over the bar and found ourselves in deep water again. We sailed on to the Tigre and there made fast to the bank close to the boathouse of the rowing club.

And now we had completed the first stage of our long cruise. We had sailed six thousand five hundred miles from Southampton and had occupied five months in doing so, for we had lingered awhile at every port, and travelled a good deal about the countries we visited. Few mishaps had befallen us and I can now look back upon a wholly delightful time. The question now arose as to whither we should go next. Our main object in coming out to this part of the world was to ascend some of the tributaries of the great River Plate, which are navigable for thousands of miles, flowing for a great part of the way by the unexplored forests and jungles of the Gran Chaco, then the undisputed domain of Indians and wild beasts. But for the present the river voyage was not to be thought of, for the intolerable torment of the mosquitoes would have made our lives a misery to us on the inland waters at this season. Those who knew the conditions advised us to postpone our cruise until the

winter. We therefore decided for a few months to leave the *Falcon* on her safe moorings in the Tigre in charge of the boy, purchase a horse each, and ride across the Pampas to the Andes.

At Fraile Muerto, a little camp town in the province of Cordova, we procured without difficulty some good horses, including a baggage animal, for about two pounds each. We rode out one morning in full marching order. Each of us had his saddle bags under him, his blanket rolled behind him, a felt sombrero, top boots, a native hide belt six inches broad, with a six-shooter stuck in the holster, and a striped poncho over the shoulder, making each man look quite an orthodox roamer of the Pampas. The baggage animal carried all the necessaries for our journey—biscuits, sugar, *yerba mate*, salt, sulphate of quinine, and so forth. An *asador* (iron skewer) kettle, the latter dangling melodiously at the horse's neck, and *bombillas*, were all that we carried in the way of culinary apparatus. For an *asado* of fresh beef, when we could get it, or of *charki* " jerked beef," the invigorating Paraguan tea, and our store of biscuits, was all that we needed in the way of commissariat.

We first rode by easy stages to the old city of Cordova, the capital of the province, which we reached in six days. Then we struck north, away from the railway, for Santiago del Estero, the next place worthy of the name of town, four hundred and seventy miles distant by the old tropilla track, now little used, along which in the olden days the strings of jingling mules were wont to bring the bars of silver from the mines of Potosi to Buenos Ayres. I must not let the memories of that joyous ride occupy undue space in this book. Pleasant it was in early morn to canter through the pure air across the Pampas, with its vast expanses extending to a far horizon melting in mirage, across greenest pastures thickly dotted with the scarlet and purple blossoms of verbenas and polyanthi, with tulips and camomile.

And the character of the country ever varied. Thus we came to a huge forest of dark stunted palm trees ; from the hill tops as far as our vision could reach the landscape was black with this gloomy, seemingly illimitable expanse of dark palm heads, covering mountains and vast plains

right-away to the horizon. Then we crossed the Salinas, a flat salt desert, glistening in the sun with white crystals, with no grass or any plant growing on the arid soil, with the exception of the gaunt giant cacti, their rectangular arms branching out like those of candelabra. Two men with outstretched arms could scarcely span one of these monsters. Many of them had died of age and stood like weird skeletons, unhealthy yellow of hue, all over the unfertile plain.

Then we skirted the outer ridges of the sierras, a land of birds and flowers, a *bocage* of many flowering shrubs of many colours, and prickly pears with large ripe fruit. The rivers that we forded never reached the Atlantic, but flowed into the Laguna de las Porongos, an inland sea nearly one hundred miles in length in the midst of a solitary desert, which has no outlet to the ocean; where the waters from many streams dry up under the hot sun. The vegetation became more of the tropics as we advanced north. The colouring of the jungle seemed now of an almost unnatural brilliancy. Strange, thorny shrubs and flowering plants thickly covered the ground underneath the blossom-covered trees, and nearly all the leaves and flowers of these were of a dazzling metallic lustre, some gleaming like blue steel, others like burnished gold or red copper or darker bronze. Glorious convolvuli with large blossoms wound luxuriantly over every bush. The snakes, birds, butterflies and beetles that fed on the acrid juices of these plants seemed to have acquired from them the same mineral sheen, so brightly flashed their gorgeous wings and scales.

At last we came to Santiago del Estero, a miserable town of mud houses, dominated by an old cathedral, inhabited for the most part by people with much Indian blood in their veins. This poor province in the heart of the country, hemmed in between two deserts, was perhaps the wildest and most primitive of the Argentine provinces. The inhabitants had acquired an unenviable reputation as banditti, murderers, and cattle lifters. We never had any trouble with them, but we were a strong party and well armed, and had little to fear from the *monteneros* who prowl about the *tropilla* track, attack

small parties of travellers and escape with their booty to unknown fastnesses in the bush.

Once we had a false alarm ; towards nightfall we had come to the rancho of a small squatter (there seems to be no rich *estançias* in this province). Round it were the usual small plots of maize and afalfa and a cattle coral. We purchased from him some afalfa for our horses and a sheep, price four shillings. We craved permission to bivouac under the paradise tree in front of his house. Everyone sleeps out of doors in this country, and it is usual at night for the whole family to bring out their *catres* and lie in the open. Our host advised us to sleep with our revolvers at our side.

" For," said he, " this is a wild part of the country. A month or two back two young fellows who had brought some cattle to the south for sale and were returning with the money slept one night under that very tree where you are ; the next morning we found them there robbed, and with their throats cut from ear to ear."

We were sleeping snugly enough when of a sudden arose a fearful uproar. Seizing our revolvers we leapt up, thinking that an Indian raid at the least was on us. But we had a good laugh when the cause of the disturbance was made clear to us. One of us who had acted as cook had hung the remains of the sheep to a tree, but had placed the sheep's head under the saddle which served as his pillow. At midnight three or four big bold dogs belonging to our host crept up, made a sudden rush at our cook, rolled his head aside, and decamped in a moment with the tempting morsel.

Sometimes we had to camp outside some little wayside *fonda* and then if one of the rough camp race meetings was on, had the opportunity of observing how wild and dangerous could be these half-savage *gauchos* and the *monteneros* who—having first satisfied themselves that there were no soldiers about, for they were all " wanted " men—had come down from the jungle to amuse themselves at the meeting. The extempore horse races and the cock fighting went on all day and the card playing and dancing all night. They were untiring and got ever madder on the vile *caña* and still viler gin which they absorbed. There were several rows and the long knives

were drawn. Our host told us that he was delighted that we had arrived so opportunely, as we could stand by him with our six-shooters in case of trouble.

He was an old Italian, and had been a soldier under Garibaldi at the siege of Montevideo in 1842, and being a foreigner was not loved by the *gauchos*. He told us that at the last meeting here the winning jockey in a race had a knife plunged between his ribs by a disappointed rider, who was coming in a good second behind him. We had to keep our eyes open, for occasionally the bare-legged ruffians, waving long knives and bottles of gin above their heads, and yelling discordantly, would gallop down towards us and rein up suddenly. All looked askant at ourselves and our horses tied up within the cactus fence, doubtlessly reckoning up the chances of success if they attempted to carry them off in the night.

But the scattered settlers in the little farms were among the pleasantest and most hospitable people I have ever met. Primitive and courteous, mostly of pure white blood, in this remote region they had preserved all the manners and customs of their ancestors the old *conquistadores*, who came here under Pizarro. We met families of pure Spanish stock, in which the high bred beauty of the women was most remarkable. Some of these people among themselves spoke *Quichua*, the language of the Incas of Peru ; they had almost forgotten the Spanish tongue.

On this long trail we met very few travellers. Once we fell in with a large *tropilla*, a picturesque sight. Slowly it approached us, a long train of huge lumbering wagons, solidly built of hard redwood, groaning horribly. These wagons were laden with hides ; wild looking men in gay coloured ponchos rode alongside of them, and behind followed a large number of spare mules. The chief of the caravan wore silver spurs, and a valuable poncho of *vicuna* hair, while a trumpet swung by his side, with which he sounded his orders to the caravan. These *tropillas* undertook enormous journeys ; the men were generally armed so as to be able to resist any Indians whom they might encounter, and the foremost wagon was often provided with a small cannon on a swivel. We happened to halt together at midday near a water pool. The captain

of the *tropilla* courteously invited us to share his meal with him. His men killed a sheep and he brought out a jar of red wine, so we had a luxurious repast.

From Santiago a four days' ride brought us to Tucuman and the railway. As we approached the city through great orange groves and sugar plantations, we saw before us in the distance a range of giant mountains looming, the Andes at last, the sierras of Aconquija, whose highest summit is seventeen thousand feet above the level of the Pacific Ocean.

CHAPTER VII

We sail up the Parana and Paraguay.—Good sport.—Indians of the Gran Chaco.—Virgin forests.—Paraguay.—Homeward bound.—Hurricane at Montevideo.—Caught in a pampero.—Explore the desert island of Trinidad.—Sail to Barbados.—Home.

AND now our long ride was over. We sold our horses and returned to Buenos Ayres—by train to Rosario, and thence by steamer. After a three months' absence we rejoined the little *Falcon* again, and were at home once more. And now we prepared for our long cruise up the great rivers. We took most of the chain and heavy articles out of the *Falcon*, by this lightening her draft to six feet six inches, which is quite enough for the Parana. In this river the height of the water varies much according to the rains in the equatorial swamps, where the Paraguay and its tributaries have their source. Sometimes there are only six feet of water in the passages between the shifting shoals, and sometimes the Chaco will be flooded for a hundred miles from the river bank. It is estimated that the volume of water brought down hourly by the River Plate and its tributaries exceeds that of all the rivers of Europe put together. There are places a thousand miles from the sea where one shore cannot be seen from the other. But as a rule the river is divided into numberless channels which wind through the intricate wilderness of swamp forest and jungle which covers the many islands.

The limit of navigation is Cuyaba in Matagrosso, two thousand three hundred and sixty-five miles from the sea. As the current is always contrary—between two and three knots—the upward journey is tedious for a sailing vessel ; it is rarely possible to tack against a head wind, so our voyage from the Tigre to Asunçion, about one thousand two hundred miles, occupied ninety-one days, and our voyage back only twenty-two days. The Italian schooners that ascend the rivers to get the hardwoods of the north are flat-bottomed and cannot tack at all, or even sail near the wind, so we beat them all going down ; but going up, when there was a fair wind, they ran away

from us with their huge spread of canvas. The ever-shifting sandbanks of the rivers necessitate the employment of a pilot. We engaged one, a Genoese called Don Juan, an excellent pilot and a good fellow.

For five days after we were all ready we tried in vain to get across the bar of Lujan, but at last the wind shifted to the south-west, the *crescente* came, we floated off, and sailed into the wide Parana de las Palmas, one of the mightiest of the mouths of the Parana. We soon got into the routine of the river voyage. When the south-west wind blew we made the most of it, and sailed as long as there was daylight ; when the north wind came we had to remain weather-bound, sometimes for a week at a time ; and in a calm we poled or warped. But the enforced delays were by no means tedious, for we found splendid sport on shore, the game including partridges, deer, duck, swans, geese, turkeys, golden plover, ibis, snipe and teal.

Sometimes we secured a wily *carpincho* or river pig, and higher up the river there were plenty of alligators to pot at. The big game had been driven inland by the flooded river, and though we tried often we did not kill a jaguar, but once shot a puma on a floating island. We had equally good sport on the river and caught plenty of good edible fish, including the *dorado* which is like a gigantic goldfish. The largest we caught was five feet in length. He had jaws that could have bitten a man's arm off, and gave plenty of play. We used to cut the *dorados* into strips which we salted and sun-dried, and found to be excellent eating, and if, as it rarely did, sport failed, there was always work for the crew to do during a calm or head wind, cutting firewood on the shore, burning charcoal, boiling down the feet of any ox that we had bought, and manufacturing neat's foot oil.

It took us thirty-three days to reach the port of Rosario. One barque had recently occupied one hundred and twenty days on the way, but that I believe was the longest time on record. We stayed there a day or two to lay in stores, and on we went again. The scenery was ever changing, and ever beautiful, and expeditions up the numerous *riachos* (streams) that penetrated the jungle, ever brought us to new wonders. Thus one day two of us in search of

game paddled in the canoes up a *riacho* that carried us deeper and deeper into the secret haunts of *carpinchos* and water fowl. On the banks was a vegetation of incredible luxuriance, not the jungle of arid Santiago, but a growth full of sap, gigantic, drawn by hot suns from the dark, soft mud. Great white lilies floated on the water. On the banks rose mighty reeds and trees of various foliage.

But that which made the wonder of the place was the mass of flowering creepers, lianes, and convolvuli that overran all, covering the other vegetation like a great blanket, climbing over the highest tree tops and then hanging over in festoons and curtains, forming the loveliest bowers, and shaded caverns of leaves, orchids and other flowers of many hues, dwellings for the lucky *carpinchos*, but only fitted to be the summer palace of Titania herself. We of course spared the monkeys, parrots and kingfishers and other innocent inhabitants of this paradise, who judging from their fearlessness, had no knowledge of men, but shot several *monte* hens, a welcome addition to our larder and robbed a bee's nest.

When becalmed we explored several of these *riachos*, one of which led us to a broad lake, surrounded by fine forest, and studded with many islands. We here shot a *lobo* (river seal), and for the first time caught sight of an anaconda, the gigantic water-snake of these rivers. We circumnavigated the lake but could nowhere discover a landing place, for the country seemed to be flooded for leagues inland. We paddled between the great trees and the intricate *lianes* into the recesses of the forest. The aspect of this wilderness was grand in the extreme. In places the dense growth hid the sky, and we progressed slowly, winding among the trunks of huge trees through the inky water, along caverns of dark branches, above us the noise of the unseen monkeys and parrots. Then we burst out once more into an open glade of the forest, glowing under the sunshine where the spread of water would be entirely covered with the Victoria Regia lily.

We not infrequenly ran on a sandbank with the *Falcon*, and at times had great difficulty in getting off again. For weeks of journey up this river we saw no signs of life on the shore, save now and then a group of Indians spearing

fish on the shore, and passed by interminable stretches of palm groves, forests and morasses. We realized that a pilot was very necessary in this network of channels. Unguided one might easily have taken one of the false channels and ascended one of the many large rivers of the Chaco, instead of the main river, until brought to a cognizance of one's error by a flight of poisoned Indian arrows from the bank.

We were brought up once close to one of the Italian schooners. Her skipper had an ugly scar on his forehead, and at the request of Don Juan he gave us the history of it. He had sailed up the river to Corrientes for a cargo of oranges, and being becalmed, had brought up along the Chaco bank. All hands were below or lying about the deck asleep, when, with a terrible yell, about twenty Indians rushed on board. They murdered the five men of his crew, and struck him with a lance on the head. He jumped into his canoe which was alongside, and with a shower of arrows following him drifted away with the current. Such disasters were not uncommon to river craft moored to the trees on the Chaco side. Whenever we did this we kept an anchor watch.

The country got wilder and more tropical as we got further north. Sometimes, when we made fast to the shore, we found that the trees were joined together with such a strong and close network of *lianes* and other parasites that to progress a yard even with the aid of a *machete* was quite impossible. On the Chaco side of the river was utter savagery for hundreds of miles inland ; on the Corrientes side was comparative civilization. We found that here the people in the little settlements spoke only the soft Indian dialect Guarani, the language of Paraguay. Of our experiences of the riverside cultivators of oranges and *mandioca*—a peaceful and amiable race—I have no space to write here.

When we reached the Paraguay River we encountered in the Chaco encampments of the Guacurus, a ferocious tribe of Indians, who spoke a harsh guttural language sounding very unpleasant after the tongue of the civilized Guaranis.

We passed the city of Corrientes and came to the junction of the Parana and Paraguay, and ascended the

latter river. One would have liked to explore some of the larger rivers that flow through the unknown Chaco, for example, the Vermejo, a stream that rises in Bolivia, flows by the city of Tarja, and then winds for upwards of a thousand miles across the Indian Chaco till it joins the Paraguay ; but it was too shallow a river for the *Falcon*. One has heard of ships being icebound, but in the Paraguay we were once lily-bound. We were at anchor in a calm for three days and the *camelotas*, islands of varied vegetation, were floating by us in their thousands. These got across our chains and gradually accumulated till we became the centre of a large island of beautiful lilies in leaf, flower and fruit. Finding that they were causing us to drag our anchor, we cut our way through them with cutlasses and hatchets, a long and tedious process.

On our ninety-first day out we came to an anchor off Asunçion, the capital of Paraguay, one thousand three hundred miles from the mouth of the river. We remained here for a month while we made some pleasant excursions into the beautiful country, and saw a good deal of the manners and customs of this pleasant people. A land of women ; for since nearly all the brave men had been killed off in the late five years' war against the Argentine Republic, Brazil and Uruguay combined, there were nine times as many women as men in the country.

But I will say nothing here of the trips we took nor of our voyage back down the river to the distant ocean, for I have already allowed more space to this river cruise of the *Falcon* than I ought to have done. And now we had to hurry down, for the river was falling rapidly, new sand-banks were showing everywhere, and very soon there would not be enough water for us until the following winter. As it was we met with difficulties and often ran ashore. But we accomplished the voyage in twenty-two days, and on October the second were back at our old berth on the Tigre after a hundred and forty-three days of cruising on the great rivers.

It is no idle boast but a solid fact that in those days the word of an Englishman was accepted all over the world. In the Argentine they have the expression *palabra Inglesa*, as expressing this confidence in our probity. Now when I was in Paraguay some action was

in progress between the Brazilian and Paraguayan Governments in reference to the status of the Paraguayan railway since the war. I forget what it was all about. But one of the Paraguayan Ministers, knowing nothing about me beyond the fact that I was an Englishman and a barrister, came to me and offered me in the name of both parties the position of arbitrator in this case ; a substantial sum of money was to be my fee. He explained that this would be far the cheapest way of settling the business, for the South American judges and juries were sure to be bribed heavily by both sides and their decision would depend on the highest bidder, whereas I, as an Englishman, would accept no bribes, and my rank as a member of the British Bar was a guarantee of my capacity to give my decision justly. This scheme did not come off. Said a foreigner to me once :

" How is it that Englishmen are so straight and their Government so crooked ? "

My companions had been fascinated by the charms of Paraguay and were loth to leave it. Such was the effect of a month of dwelling among the lotus eaters. All the way down the river my crew had talked of the cheapness of land in Paraguay, of the profits to be made by cattle breeding, or by the growing of oranges, afalfa, coffee or tobacco. I knew that few Europeans can long remain lotus eaters ; the disappointed one immortalized by our great poet who hungered for " summer isles of Eden lying in dark purple spheres of sea " was foolish only for a moment and knew that " Better fifty years of Europe than a cycle of Cathay."

Anyhow it was arranged that instead of first accompanying the *Falcon* to England my crew should at once travel back to Paraguay and seek their fortunes there. When it was known that I wanted men, plenty of volunteers presented themselves ; three Spaniards from the Capitania of the Tigre offered to desert and join me ; but with the help of our ex-pilot Don Juan I engaged three Genoese sailors who wished to return to Italy. Two of them turned out to be excellent men, but the third had been a fireman on steamers, was no sailor and could not be entrusted with the tiller in bad weather. My crew came on board, and after waiting for several days for water to

float us off the bar, we went into the Boca to fit out, and thence sailed for Montevideo. My crew now numbered five—myself, the three Italians and the boy.

At Montevideo we were detained by a heavy pampero, the hurricane of these regions. It came suddenly upon us with great fury. The perfectly clear sky was quite obscured to us by whirling clouds of dust that enveloped the whole city and the roads. The first blast swung all the vessels round with a violent jerk that caused several to drag their anchors and foul each other. The men-of-war in the outer roads were steaming up to their anchors. We had two anchors down with sixty fathoms of chain on each, and dragged but a short way. The strain on our chain was tremendous ; we were nearly drawn under at times by the more violent gusts. The wind blew off all the tops of the waves, driving solid sheets of water through the air. We pitched our bows so deep into the seas that I entertained serious fears lest we should founder at anchor.

As far as one could see through the blinding spray the aspect of sea, sky and city was really awful. The atmosphere passed through several extraordinary changes of colour, now brick red, now pale green, the ships, houses and vegetation all assuming the same hues. The lightning, forked and purple, was very vivid ; each wave was capped with a flame, and the large hailstones that fell seemed to be mixed with showers of sparks. The numerous casualties on shore and afloat testified to the power of the wind. Many people were killed, hundreds of trees were uprooted, fifteen stone houses were blown down in a row on the sea front of the town, the new exhibition building at Buenos Ayres was destroyed, and among the other accidents to the shipping, a large barque at anchor, with all canvas stowed, was capsized by the first gust.

We had anchored near several of the heavy iron-ribbed lighters which discharge the cargoes from vessels in the outer roads ; they were much larger craft than the *Falcon*. Several of these had dragged their anchors and were tossing about around us in the heavy seas. We had anxious work dodging these, for to collide with one of these tough monsters meant probable destruction to the

yacht. One did come foul of us and carried away a great part of our starboard bulwarks. Then she tried to come on the top of us, and bringing her bowsprit down on our decks, snapped it off short. I ordered one of the crew to clamber on board of her and pay out her chain. This he did, and she fell away clear of us. The man, of course, found it impossible to climb back to the *Falcon* so had to remain where he was until the weather moderating enabled us to lower a boat to take him off.

Then we dragged right under the iron bows of another lighter. Her bowsprit was not a yard from our stern. Whenever a great wave passed under us and raised her she seemed to be right over us and about to fall and inevitably cut us down and sink us. We found that we could not give the lighter any more chain and we could not move from our own position without fouling other lighters. All through that stormy night and the next day we watched that cruel iron bow rising and falling behind us, expecting with each fiercer gust to hear the dull thud and the sound of crushing timber. But the *Falcon* dragged no further and she escaped her doom. That she did so escape seemed miraculous, and had the good effect of inspiring my Italians with a profound faith in the luck of the *Falcon*.

Having effected our repairs we sailed from Montevideo on the 15th of November for our next port of call, Bahia, one thousand eight hundred miles distant. This voyage promised to be a long one, for it was to be no comfortable running down of the " trades " as on our outward voyage ; at this time of the year the wind blows from the north along this coast with rains and frequent squalls, so that we should have a dead beat of it all the way and a contrary current. The wind shifted about a good deal, so that we were now on one tack, now on another, going about frequently so as to head as near as possible for our destination, the *Falcon* continually pitching her nose into short choppy seas and shipping a good deal of water. In this portion of the ocean the fish were very numerous and we caught all the palmitos, dolphins, king fish and baracouta that we required. As we progressed the rain became constant, and we had to be battened down on account of the choppy seas.

On our sixth day out, when we were three hundred and forty miles from the nearest land, the sky cleared and the glass fell ominously. At twelve o'clock there rose suddenly from the southern horizon an inky mass of cloud that spread over the heavens and advanced towards us with tremendous rapidity. We lowered all our canvas on deck, stowed the mainsail, and lashed the boom firmly amidships. On board a full-rigged ship that was about a mile to windward of us the crew were taking in canvas as rapidly as possible. It was obvious that we were in for another River Plate hurricane. The mass of cloud was over us and had covered the entire sky. At first there was no wind, but the rain fell down in torrents. Then the south-east gale was on us. We put the reefed trysail and the storm jib on the little ship and scudded before it. Soon the wind shifted to the south-west, as is the way with the pampero, and increased in violence. The sea rose very suddenly and some of the waves that followed us looked so formidable that I regretted not having hove the vessel to, with the drogue out; but it would have been very dangerous to have attempted to do so now.

The *Falcon* behaved wonderfully well in this, the heaviest weather I had ever seen her in. Throughout the next day the pampero was blowing with its full fury, and the sea was higher, so we shipped a good deal of water over our quarter at times in the high confused sea. At four in the afternoon I was steering when the member of the crew who was with me on deck cried out *Caramba que marecada !*, and looking over my shoulder I perceived a huge wave of green water with a curling breaking crest rapidly overtaking us. I jammed myself firmly inside the tiller lines and steered so that the wave should strike us dead aft. Up went our stern with a jerk that jumped me off my feet, then up flew our bow till our deck must have been at an angle of forty-five degrees. The roller had passed us, but the peril was far from over yet. Another equally lofty roller followed close and between the two was a valley so narrow and steep that it seemed impossible that the *Falcon* after her descent could raise her stern in time to lift to the second fall of water. I glanced back at the roller and then as before kept the vessel dead before it.

We slid down the slope of the liquid valley ; then our stern began to rise a little as the foot of the second roller reached us, and then there was a crash and a sudden darkness, and I felt a mass of water rush right over my head. We had been pooped ; doubtless to anyone looking from above the masts of the vessel only would have been visible—the rest of her must have been submerged. But the *Falcon* was strong ; the mass of water had not broken through her decks ; the sea had struck her true and we escaped broaching to. I saw the bulwarks slowly rise above the sea ; then the little vessel gave herself a shake and the water soon poured out of her scuppers, this being facilitated by the comparatively calm sea that always succeeds to exceptionally high waves. This was the only occasion during the cruise of the *Falcon* in which we were in serious peril. Had we taken the first roller on board, the second roller, falling on the vessel as she lay stunned, with her decks full of water, would certainly have sent her down.

During the second night of the gale steering was more anxious work than ever, for it was too dark to distinguish the perilous cross seas that occasionally rolled up on our beam. But the next day, though it still blew hard and the sea was high, the pampero moderated and the glass rose steadily. Then came head winds again with squalls and rain. We were plagued like Vanderdecken in the *Flying Dutchman ;* for whenever we went about the wind would turn round and head us again. So I decided before making for Bahia to sail to the desert island of Trinidad, and explore it. The description of this romantic spot in the South Atlantic Directory was very tempting. This island, which is about fifteen miles round, rising abruptly from the sea, with lofty rugged mountains, is in 20° 30′ south and is seven hundred miles from the Brazilian coast. At last on the 8th of December, after twenty-four days of struggling against head winds and heavy seas, we came to anchor in a dead calm off a cascade on the lee side of the island, and glad we were to get our belongings snug and dry again.

We remained nine days at anchor off this wild and romantic spot. Before us towered into the clouds masses of barren volcanic rock and basaltic cliffs, with an unbroken

line of great breakers rolling up the narrow beaches, and dashing high up the cliffs, even on a windless day. The sea swarmed with all manner of fish, of which we caught plenty. Myriads of seafowl of various species covered the island who all day kept up their babel of shrill melancholy cries. As we discovered afterwards, these had no fear of man, for they attacked us boldly as we approached their breeding places, and we had to beat them off with sticks. We rowed along the shore just outside the breakers in search of a landing place. One of the crew and myself at last effected a landing in a cove, and we soon discovered what an uncanny place we had come to. The only vegetation on this part of the island consisted of dead trees of some hard wood. They had long been dead for Captain Marryat, who had evidently landed on the island, mentioned this weird dead forest in " Frank Mildmay." In the way of animal life there were the foul, noisy, aggressive birds and swarming hosts of huge, hideous, saffron-coloured, protruding-eyed land crabs, who also came up boldly to attack us. At this place there was no possibility of scaling the cliffs, or of walking any distance along the shore, so finding a tiny spring of water we bivouacked by it, and returned to the ship the following morning.

A few days later, the surf moderating, one of the Italians, the boy and I landed at the cascade of which I have spoken. Clambering up the ravine down which the cascade flows, we reached the watershed of the island and found ourselves in a grove of tree ferns. From this col we looked down on a wonderful and fantastic landscape. Save for the tree-fern grove on which we stood all was desolate. Dark, barren peaks of burnt rocks were round us, which sloped down to the ravines and fiords of the barren surf-swept shore. Cautiously we descended the rugged mountains to the windward side of the island, and followed the beach for some way, but could find no fresh water, so were driven back by thirst to return by the way we had come. It was dangerous work scaling these rotten and crumbling volcanic slopes. Half way up we found a ravine with some water in it, and encamped there. The land crabs came down in their hundreds to devour us, so we kept watch, one at a time, to slay the brutes whole-

sale with a heavy stick, and so fast as we slew them they were devoured by their cannibal brethren. The next morning we returned to the cascade, signalled to the yacht for a boat and were taken off.

Little did I think as I saw the peaks of Trinidad fading away in the distance as we sailed the next day that I should visit it again in a few years time and spend three months on its desolate shores. We sailed to Bahia in six days, and had a very good time there, cruising up the River Jaguaripe and other rivers that flow into the broad bay of Bahia. From Bahia we sailed to Pernambuco, and from thence to Georgetown, Demerara. The distance to the latter port from Pernambuco is two thousand nautical miles. The voyage occupied exactly ten days, so this is the best log that the *Falcon* can show ; and indeed I do not think that it would be easy to find another sailing yacht of her tonnage that had ever kept up a speed of two hundred miles a day for ten consecutive days.

Our best day's work was two hundred and twenty nautical, or two hundred and fifty-three English miles. There were several causes that conduced to this rapid run. We sailed away from Pernambuco before a fresh south-east wind, which enabled us to run for days under all canvas, spinnaker included. We encountered no calms on crossing the line, but passed straight from the south-east to the north-east trade winds, which in their turn were favourable to us, being on our beam. Then we had a strong favourable current with us. It is at Cape San Roque, the eastern extremity of the new world, that the great ocean current from the Cape of Good Hope divides, one stream flowing down the coast of South America to the south-west, and the other stream flowing up the coast to the north-west. This is known as the main equatorial current ; further on after it has crossed the Caribbean Sea, it receives to us the more familiar appellation of the Gulf Stream. It is said sometimes to flow at the rate of four knots an hour. We had at least a two-knot current with us.

We sailed up the Demerara River and anchored off Georgetown, the pleasantest place that I had yet visited, though in those days rather unhealthy, and subject to epidemics of yellow fever, and it is the gateway of one of

the grandest tropical countries of the world, whose unknown wonders I should have loved to explore.

From Demerara we sailed to another British colony, Barbados, and anchored in Carlisle Bay. On landing I found that all the shops were shut and the church bells were ringing. On enquiring the cause of this I was told that this day had been proclaimed a holiday and day of thanksgiving throughout the island of Barbados for the cessation of the yellow fever, which had been raging here. All my crew had been ill of late, and I myself was not well. The doctors, judging from the symptoms, thought that we were suffering from some form of blood poisoning, consequent on our almost exclusive tinned meat diet, or on our having partaken of unwholesome fish. The *Falcon* too was in need of repairs and the renewal of running rigging, so I determined to return home for a while and come back after the hurricane season had passed to undertake a cruise through the West Indies. I paid off my crew, found means for them to return to Europe, laid up the *Falcon* on the shingle bank under the shade of waving cabbage-palms, cocos and manchineels, and sailed to Bristol in a sugar barque. As a matter of fact ill health prevented me from fitting out the *Falcon* and I sold her. Some years later on, re-visiting the West Indies, I saw the *Falcon* at St. Vincent, and borrowed her for a cruise. Ultimately she was lost in a West Indian hurricane. She was a stout old boat, and it took nothing less than a hurricane to bring her to her end.

CHAPTER VIII

The New Guinea scheme.—Lord Derby denounces buccaneers.—Cruise of the *Sanspeur*.—Through the West Indies.—Monsieur de Lesseps.—Panama.—A curious letter.—Fit out *Falcon II*.—Two cruises on the Baltic.—Old '49ers.—Along the Gulf of Mexico.

ON my return to England I found that during my two years' absence things had not gone well with me. Burglars had entered my rooms and had carried away most of my valuables, and the solicitors to whom I had entrusted my affairs had robbed all their clients, defrauded one bank of fifteen thousand pounds, and had bolted with their loot, including much of my small capital. It was at that time that my fortune ebbed to a very low sum indeed, but I am happy to say that none of my friends guessed this, and that I never borrowed money. Being young and hopeful I set to work, wrote the "*Cruise of the Falcon*," which proved a success, and made my name known. I also did a good deal of free-lance journalism, writing for *The Graphic*, *Field*, etc., and also wrote a novel which was not a success. At any rate the publisher of it vanished, and I never received anything on account of sales. However, a story, "A Sea Lawyer," published as a serial story in *Cassell's Magazine*, did well, and appeared afterwards in book form under the title of "A Desperate Voyage." So I contrived to make both ends meet.

It was at this period that various adventurous schemes were brought before my notice, to be rejected, some for want of capital, and others because I had learnt by bitter experience that they probably were the devices of rogues. But one *bona fide* scheme did attract me. McIver, a man who had served under several flags, wanted volunteers for his New Guinea adventure. At that time New Guinea was in the hands of its ferocious native savages; no flag of any European nation had been hoisted there, save in the north-west where the Dutch had a settlement. It was his plan to purchase a thousand-ton barque, load her with trade goods, and sail to New Guinea with a number of gentlemen adventurers (I think there were to be about

one hundred of us), establish his followers on the island, obtain concessions of land from chiefs by purchase or otherwise, peg out claims over mineral deposits, and then, when we had proved the value of our discoveries, form a company. Each adventurer was to contribute the sum of one hundred pounds.

The whole thing was practically settled. The barque lay in the Thames, and the loading of her cargo was in progress when the late Lord Derby in Parliament denounced the scheme, said that we were a lot of buccaneers, and the Government, to our great indignation, put a stop to our expedition. Buccaneers forsooth! We were, after all, only doing what later on the Chartered Company pioneers were allowed to do in South Africa, and the founders of the East African and Nigerian Companies to do in East and West Africa. But we had no big names or capital at the back of us, so of course we were buccaneers.

The sequel is amusing. Our plans had aroused the interest of the Western Australian Government, so they dispatched a ship to New Guinea and hoisted the British flag. The British Government wanted no further colonial responsibilities, so refused to ratify the annexation, and ordered the Australians to lower the flag and abandon the island. It seems that they were buccaneers too. Then Germany, who had been watching these proceedings closely, annexed a great part of the island. Lastly, Great Britain, waking up at last to the danger of allowing a foreign power to establish itself so near Australia, made arrangements with Germany and acquired a portion of the island.

So, branded as a buccaneer, I had to turn back to peaceable book writing and free-lance journalism.

I had been back in England for more than a year when I was invited to join a party who were about to take a cruise in very different conditions to those to which I was accustomed. I was invited by my friend, the then Duke of Sutherland, to accompany him in his steam yacht *Sanspeur* on her voyage to the West Indies and the Spanish Main. It was a delightful cruise in the course of which we visited St. Thomas, St. Kitts, Antigua, Guadaloupe, Dominica, St. Lucia, St. Vincent, Barbados, Grenada, Trinidad, Nevis, Curaçao, La Guaira, Colon,

and Caraccas. On our way out across the Bay of Biscay a rather serious fire broke out in the storeroom ; but it was extinguished under the guidance of Captain Shaw, the head of the fire brigade, who happened to be among the guests on board.

In the course of this cruise I met M. de Lesseps. It was the winter of 1885. With his son he was making a voyage to Colon and Panama to see for himself how the construction of his canal was progressing. I first met him at Jamaica. He was very cheery and spoke most optimistically of his great scheme. In a speech which he made at a dinner at Government House the old man declared : " I am confident that two things will happen to me before I die. Another son will be born to me, and I shall steam through the Panama Canal."

The first prophecy was, I believe, accomplished, but alas, not the second. He went to Colon and we followed him with the *Sanspeur* a few days later. There we met him again. The signs of mismanagement and worse were visible everywhere. Valuable machinery lay rusting on the beach. Stores were rotting. Pilfering on a great scale was going on. All was waste and neglect, and there was much avoidable sickness in the place—we lost our chief steward of yellow fever at Colon. De Lesseps' eyes had been opened. He realized that he had been lied to, that all was lost, and that he was morally responsible for the impoverishing of thousands of French peasants who, relying on him, had emptied their stockings into the coffers of the Company. We noticed that all his cheeriness had gone. He seemed to be years older than when we had seen him last in Jamaica. He was a broken man.

I found the old *Falcon* at St. Vincent, borrowed her, and invited the party on the *Sanspeur* to come for a short day's cruise in her. There was a strong wind but she proceeded very slowly, and I found that the weeds on her bottom were two feet long. At last the launch of the *Sanspeur* had to come to our rescue and tow us home again.

The English of the West Indian negro can be as solemnly absurd as that of the Indian baboo. During the cruise of the *Falcon*, at Dignity Balls, I had heard amusing dialogues, and I wish that I had kept a record of the quaint sayings that we listened to while the *Sanspeur*

wandered among the islands. I did take a copy of one characteristic letter. The *Sanspeur* had anchored off Dominica. One morning a fat old negress came alongside in a boat bringing a letter for the Duke. It ran thus :

> " If it will please your Royal Highness. I am John Smith, the coloured poet of Dominica. Being a poet I am not conversant with daily matters and your noble advent hither only occurred to me this morning through a friend. Being a poet I am sensitive of August Company and dare not hazard a call. So I give this letter to a friend to bear for me. Will it please your Royal Highness to accept a few copies of my poesies and so greatly honour John Smith (Poet). P.S. It would be presumptuous for me to dictate what gratuity would be seemly for said poems."

We bought some copies of his poesies, but they did not come up to his prose. They dealt in a conventional way with birds, flowers, and the beauties of nature.

After a very pleasant cruise we returned to Southampton in the spring of 1886. I now felt that I ought to have a boat of my own with which I could make a foreign cruise. So at the Doves at Hammersmith (of all unlikely places) I purchased for twenty pounds a boat of three tons. She was an old P. & O. lifeboat, built by White of Cowes, double-skinned, the outer skin being of diagonal planking, and both skins being of teak. She had been rigged as a ketch and a false keel had been fastened on her. She only drew three feet, a great advantage in view of the cruise among the winding fiords and sounds of the German and Danish coasts of the Baltic which I was meditating ; for on all the shores of that sea there are innumerable small artificial havens which have been constructed by the herring fishermen for the accommodation of their little craft, little hidden havens, unmarked on the largest scale British charts, never visited by English yachts. Thus a little boat following the coast has nearly always some snug harbour to run for should bad weather come on, whereas a craft with deeper draught must needs stand out to sea and make the best of it she can.

So I set to work to get her ready for sea. I had to help me a curious character—a big, bearded, handsome gipsy, a bird fancier nominally, but known to the police

as a burglar, smuggler, and a poacher of deer in Richmond Park. He was the champion prize fighter of a large district. But he was the reverse of being a quarrelsome man, was of a gentle character, and was a teetotaller. The police liked him, though they sometimes wanted him. He had a wonderful dog that would always warn him by a growl when a policeman was approaching. It was a policeman, by the way, who recommended him to me. He was an hereditary outlaw, but was faithful to those who trusted him and whom he liked.

The picturesque old Doves, where Thomson wrote his " Seasons," had near it the houses of Morris and other distinguished æsthetic socialists ; but behind them, across the wooden bridge, was then a cut-throat and somewhat thievish slum. It was because of this that I had engaged my gipsy. It was quite safe, I was informed, to leave the *Falcon II*, for so I called her, alone at night on the shingle below the Doves, for was it not known that the formidable gipsy was in charge of her. One morning, when we came down to the boat to proceed with her fitting out, we found that all the carpenter's tools which we had left on board had disappeared. The consternation and distress of my gipsy were affecting to behold. That any of the wooden bridge thieves should dare to steal from a boat under his protection was incredible. He regarded it as an act of *lése majesté*.

" I will get them all back before to-night," he said confidently ; and he did. He knew all the thieves in the place, soon traced the missing articles, put the fear of God into the guilty, and recovered all. And it was quite in accordance with his peculiar code of ethics that he absolutely refused to take any wages from me for that day, as he said he had done no work.

In the *Falcon II* I made three successive summer cruises, coming back to London to work during the winter. I took with me sometimes a professional hand—a young bargee—and sometimes a friend. In the first summer I cruised along the North Sea and through the Norfolk Broads. In the following summer I coasted to Copenhagen, where I laid the boat up for the winter and returned to London by steamer. In the third summer I sailed her back to Hammersmith by a different route.

We towed an eleven-foot dinghy astern of us all the way. This dinghy had a false keel and could sail extremely well under her balance lug, so that she was very useful for exploring shallow fiords and rivers.

The Baltic cruise was unlike that of the *Falcon*, which was a series of long ocean passages whereas now it was to be a coasting voyage throughout, and we were only at sea for about seven nights in all. We found the Baltic a stormy sea, with somewhat difficult coasts, so we had often to use all our wits to avoid disaster. It was a good training in seamanship. We coasted along the shores of five countries—Holland, Germany, Denmark, Sweden and Belgium.

We first sailed to Harwich and thence crossed the North Sea to Hellevoetsluis. From there we went by canal through Rotterdam and Amsterdam to the Zuider Zee. After exploring the ports and islands of that inland sea we took canal to Delfzyl, whence we sailed to Emden, now a strongly fortified place with great docks, that was of much use to Germany in the Great War, but was then a picturesque sleepy old mediæval town a mile from the sea, with which it was connected by a shallow canal. From Emden, by difficult passages which dry at low water, we sailed across the flats to Norderney, and from here, going out into the North Sea, we skirted those Frisian Islands which bear such curious names—Skiermonikoog, Wangeroog, Spiekeroog, Borkum, Rottum, Bosch—mere sandhills in those days, covered with blue sea-grass, between which pass the narrow channels that wind across the great sand flats to the little havens on the low Hanoverian coast, which is out of sight from the islands. These flats are all uncovered at low water, and are the feeding ground, as we saw, of innumerable seals, porpoises, and wild fowl. Years after this the author of the " Riddle of the Sands " made this weird region the scene of his story. Then, having rounded Wangeroog, we sailed up the broad gulf of the Jade to Wilhelmshaven.

Wilhelmshaven was a most depressing place then, for it was but the skeleton of the mighty naval port it was to be. We roamed through a waste of desolate rain-swept docks, mostly empty of ships, the only people to be seen about being a few disconsolate sentries in caped great-

coats. In the coming city most of the stately public buildings had been erected in advance of the future population, but the chief streets were only sketched out, having a building every hundred yards or so. The Prussians had great difficulties to contend with here. The reclamation of this mud flat involved much labour ; floods and tempests used to destroy the dykes and docks as they were nearing completion. But the Germans are persevering, and we know what Wilhelmshaven had become when the Great War broke out.

In those days Prussia had not taught Germany to consider herself the destined ruler of the world. Even the officials had not the arrogance of supermen. They were polite and friendly. Their consciences did not prick them, and they had nothing to hide ; so foreigners were not suspected of espionage ; an Englishman could wander among the defences of Wilhelmshaven or make Sketches of Borkum as much as he pleased. On my return journey courteous officials gave me permission to travel from the Jade to Emden by a military canal not yet open but in course of construction ; and the Custom officers, instead of placing my dutiable stores under seal, merely asked me to give my word that while going through the canal I would not take any of these on shore. While visiting the great seaports such as Hamburg, Cuxhaven and Kiel, or little fishing villages, I found great friendliness displayed by the people. All this was changed when I went to Germany two years before the war, and the signs of suspicion and hatred were everywhere manifest. Everyone knew that war was brewing, with the exception of certain politicians in England.

The Kiel canal did not exist in those days ; thus in order to cross from the North Sea to the Baltic we had to sail up the coast to the mouth of the Eider River, which is connected with the Baltic by canal. We found this little-used waterway to be exceedingly pretty ; the river is bordered by hills and occasionally opens out in broads —*brednings* as they are called here. Having sailed for some way up the Eider we came to the canal, which soon brought us to Holtenau, where it enters the Baltic close to Kiel.

From Kiel we had a delightful cruise over the tideless sea, calling at many little havens that no yacht had entered before us. First we sailed along the fiords of Schleswig, then up Alse Sound and the Little Belt, penetrating every fiord we passed, until we left the frontier behind us, and now had Danish territory on either side of us. As we approached the frontier in the North of Schleswig, the inhabitants were Danes to the backbone, and all entertained the hope that Germany someday would be compelled to restore the country to Denmark.

For example, when I landed at Haderslev I found that there was no love lost between the two races. In the main street were the two principal cafés facing each other. At one café High German papers only were lying on the little marble tables, and everyone there, were he officer, parson, merchant, or waiter, was speaking German. The other café was patronized by Danes only, and all the papers were Danish. So too was it with the churches and places of amusement, each race had its own. A little steamer ran across the sound to Assens on the island of Funen. Here perforce passengers of the two nationalities had to meet. I took a trip in this steamer, and a row soon got up between some German excursionists and some Danish yeomen ; the latter insisting on singing patriotic songs that were regarded as seditious by the others.

From Veile we steered eastwards across the broad Kattegat, calling at little islands and exploring great fiords on the north coast of Zeeland, sailed past Elsinore and through the famous sound, and so reached Copenhagen, where the *Falcon II* was laid up for the winter. In the following summer we sailed to Malmo in Sweden, cruised down the east coast of Zeeland, passed through the Eider canal again, called at Cuxhaven, Hamburg, Harlingen and Ostend, and so returned to the Thames and Hammersmith.

The details of this cruise are all set out in " *The Falcon on the Baltic*," but I should like to say something of the people whom I met in the five countries that I visited. I started on this cruise in the year of Queen Victoria's Jubilee. The Princes of Europe had come to England to do her homage. It seemed that a period of peace and good will had settled on the earth. The nations had ceased snarling at each other. All the people whom I met—save

perhaps the North Schleswigers—were happy and contented. An Englishman was welcomed everywhere abroad. The inns of the Baltic coast were full of charm. There was something very homely and pleasant about the Danish inns, for example. They were like what English inns were once, when there was plenty of good cheer and solid comfort, when the host was a host indeed, and became one's friend before one had been half an hour under his roof.

A great many of these Danish innkeepers, by the way, were old '49ers, gold diggers in California during the first rush who, when they had made a sufficiency, being wise men, returned home to settle down. Nearly all the rest of the jolly old fellows who kept inns along all the coasts I visited were retired captains of sailing vessels, and all spoke English. But since the war, spoilt are the old inns, gone is the courtesy of the landlords. Most of the so-called hotels of the English countryside are now patronized by the motors of the vulgar new rich, or by chars-à-bancs full of noisy cads, and the managers have deteriorated to their level.

The old '49ers had not been spoilt by a sojourn in the United States, but the same cannot be said of some young Scandinavians who, after having passed a few years in America, render themselves as ridiculous in the eyes of the genuine Americans as they make themselves astonishing and disgusting to their own stay-at-home folk when they return to their native country. We came across an amusing example of the class when we were alongside the quay at Veile. He called on us—a remarkably free-and-easy *sans ceremonie* young man who at once made himself quite at home in our cabin. I tell this story in "*The Falcon on the Baltic*," but it is worth repeating. He informed me that he was native of Veile, but that he had emigrated to the United States when he was sixteen; that he now ran an hotel in the U.S.; that he had a sweetheart in Veile, had come over to marry her and to take her back with him to the U.S.; that the U.S. was the only country fit for a man to live in. He invariably spoke of his adopted home as the "U.S." To believe him, Paradise before the Fall must have been a shabby sort of place in comparison with the least desirable fragment of the Great Republic.

" No man can know what's what," he said to me, " unless he's been in the States. Of course you've been to the U.S., sir ? "

I was obliged to admit that I had not.

" You don't mean that ! " he exclaimed in great astonishment. " You seemed smart-like, and to know what's what, so I made sure you had been there."

After a pause he cackled on again.

" Ah ! I'm so glad I met you ! I felt so lonely here ; I had no one to talk to ; you see they are all God-dam fools here. I could not live in this hole. My gel's nice enough, but she's a fool, poor thing ; she can't help being a Dane ; however, we'll smarten her up in the U.S."

" You'll be glad to leave Denmark again," I said to this unpatriotic person.

" I guess I will ; I have been almighty dull here. I calculate I have been walking up and down this village for two weeks, and not a God-dam soul could I find to talk to until I met you."

" But did you not say that you belonged here ; have you no relations ? " I enquired.

" Oh, I have a father and a mother and sisters and that sort of folk, you know, living up in the town there, but I can't get along with them ; they ain't been away from home like me, so they are God-dam fools, and I can't hold conversations with them nohow."

" And what do they think of you ? Do they say that you have improved since you have been away ? "

" Well, they can't quite make me out," he naively replied ; " They don't understand Yankee ways, poor souls. They are a slow lot in this old country."

And so he went on reviling his country, his countrymen, and all their ways. The polite continental custom of taking off one's hat on entering a shop prevails in Denmark.

" Such a nigger-slave trick it is," he exclaimed, indignantly. " I tell them that it disgusts an independent, free-born American. It makes me feel sick to see it, and I won't take my hat off to no one ; so that poor old stay-at-home, my father, pitched into me the other day and told me that I was a bad-mannered pig."

There was a monument on the quay near the yacht, dedicated to the brave Danes who fell in the war of 1864.

" What is that ? " I asked our friend.

" I guess I don't know," he replied. " I think it is something to do with a little fight—a war these Danes call it !—which once came off here. God-dam idiots, they don't know anything about wars I reckon. I guess now that Civil War in the United States was something like a war."

This youth, who in his own estimation was so almighty cute, had passed through England on his way home, and he told us a simple tale about his adventures in a train.

" There were two men in the carriage with me," he said, " and one brought out a pack of cards and taught the other a game I had never seen in America. It is done like this : a man turns down three cards upside-down and the other one bets which of them is the knave. I saw the man who was betting win a lot of money ; then he nudged me, and while the other wasn't looking he made a scratch with his nail on the back of the knave and winked at me.

" I had smartened up in the States and I saw his meaning at once. The cards were turned down again and we both saw the marked knave, and we each put a sovereign on it, and of course we won. Then the other man went mad, and swore against his God-dam luck, saying he wouldn't play any more as he had lost all his money."

" So you went away a pound to the good ? " I said.

" Oh no, I did not ; for you see the man who had won the money chaffed the other, and said he was afraid to play with such a cute Yankee as I was ; but for a long time the man would not play, until at last we bullied him so that he cried, " God-damme ! to show that it ain't because I am afraid, I will play once more. I have got no more money, but here is my gold watch and chain ; it is worth one hundred guineas ; now if you'll stake fifty pounds against it, why damme, here goes to try my luck ; but mind you, win or lose, this will be the last time. I suppose you would like me to lose my very trousers to you ! "

" So I put on all I had in my pocket, twenty pounds, and the other chap put on the rest.

" And you won the watch ? "

" No, I can't understand how it was, nor could the other chap. I could have staked my bottom dollar that we had backed the marked card, but we could not have done so, for, when the card was turned up it was not the knave. We must have been darned careless not to have made quite sure of that marked card before we put the money on. And the other chap kept his word and wouldn't play any more."

When I told him that the three card trick was a very ancient British trap to catch gulls with, and explained to him that the man who had marked the knave was the accomplice of the other, his cock-a-hoop manner suddenly vanished, his cheeks turned scarlet, and, terribly humiliated, he seized his hat, said in a mild voice, " I must now say Good night to you, they will be waiting supper for me at home," and slunk off.

I had a good deal of cruising at that time, for when I got back to Hammersmith with the little *Falcon II* in the following year, I had the luck to be invited to stay for the winter with the Duke of Sutherland at his property on Lake Butler, Florida. The sailing, shooting and fishing there were excellent, and once I went away by myself for a fortnight in what is locally known as a canoe, a flat-bottomed craft on to which I fitted lee-boards and a balance-lug sail ; in this I sailed to Tampa, down the Gulf of Mexico, inside the Florida keys—delightful palmetto-covered islets on which I used to camp at night —a perfect cruise had it not been for the mosquitoes.

CHAPTER IX

A buried treasure.—Fit out the *Alerte*.—Sail to Trinidad.—Hove to.—A revolution in Brazil.—Return to England.—On land crabs.—Charles Spedding.—The Gilgit road.—Go to Kashmir.—The Bandobast wallah.

WHEN I returned to England in the spring, my friend William Laird Clowes, the naval correspondent of *The Times*, suggested to me my next venture. He told me that there were persistent rumours of the existence of a buried treasure on the desert island of Trinidad, which I had already visited in the *Falcon*. Five bands of adventurers had already fitted out expeditions to look for that treasure, but these, in consequence of mutiny, the difficulty of landing and other causes, failed to make any real attempt of digging into the landslip which now covers the spot where the treasure is supposed to lie, and losing heart in the presence of the preliminary perils abandoned the island after a few days' stay. He told me that I could obtain all the information I required from a member of the last expedition who lived in Newcastle.

So I went to Newcastle and saw this gentleman. He told me that the treasure was supposed to consist of gold and silver looted from Lima during the Peruvian War of Independence. The whole of the evidence is given in my book "*The Cruise of the Alerte*," so I will not repeat it here. Suffice it to say here that there is very good reason to think that such a treasure is, or was, lying hidden in Trinidad, but the difficulty lay in locating it, as the bearings given were not very clear and landslips had partly obliterated landmarks.

I decided to fit out a boat and search for the treasure in a more thorough fashion than my predecessors. My old friend John Picket, yacht builder of West Quay, Southampton, who had built the *Ripple* and fitted out the *Falcon* for me, soon found the boat for my purpose—the yawl *Alerte*, built in 1864, of thirty-three tons register, and fifty-six tons yacht measurement. In view of the nature of our venture, I determined to ship as few paid hands as possible, and to outnumber these by what in the

parlance of the old privateer days may be termed " gentlemen adventurers," volunteers who would work as sailors on board and navvies on the island, and who would each be entitled to receive a share of the proceeds of the venture should anything be discovered. The officers of the vessel were to be selected from this body and I would act as captain. We had nine volunteers and four paid hands, two of the latter had served with me before—John Wright, who had been with me for two summers in the Baltic, and Arthur Cotton, who as a boy had been the only paid hand on the *Falcon*. A few of the volunteers had some experience of sailing.

We sailed from Southampton on August 29, 1889, and followed much the same route we had taken in the *Falcon* to Bahia, called at a few ports on the way, and visited the Selvagees, three desert islands lying between Madeira and the Canaries. Seven days' sailing brought us from Bahia to Trinidad and once again I set eyes on that weird island. As we neared it its features could gradually be distinguished. The mountains, fantastically-shaped of volcanic rock, rose sheer from the boiling surf. Where the mountains had been shaken to pieces by the fires and earthquakes of volcanic action, landslips of black and red debris sloped steeply into the yawning ravines ; and on the summit of the island, as usual, lay a wreath of dense cloud vapour, never still, but rolling and twisting into strange shapes as the wind eddied among the crags.

My companions had expected from what I had told them to find this islet an uncanny place, and now they gazed at the shore with amazement and confessed that my description of the scenery was anything but exaggerated. It would be impossible to convey in words a just idea of the mystery of Trinidad. The very colouring seems unearthly—in places it is dismal black and in others the fire-consumed crags are of strange metallic hues, vermilion, green and copper-brown. When one has landed on its shores this uncanny impression is enhanced. The island bears all the appearance of being an accursed spot, whereon no kindly creature or true vegetation can live, for among the skeleton branches in the grim forest of dead trees that partly covers the island lurk only the hideous land crabs and the foul and cruel sea birds.

Ships of course find no shelter whatever while lying off Trinidad, so the *Alerte*, during her three months' stay there, had either to remain at anchor in the open ocean, or heave to a few miles off, exposed to all sorts of weather ; for we were within the limit of the River Plate pamperos, and at times had to contend with a hard blow and a heavy sea. During our stay two or three of us used to remain on board in charge of the yacht while the rest did the digging on shore. The lifeboat was left with the shore party, who could easily draw it up on the beach, and the little dinghy was on the yacht's deck. For most of the time during the operations on shore I remained on board myself, only visiting the camp occasionally, for of course, lying as we were in so exposed a roadstead, it might be necessary to slip the anchor and put to sea at any moment. The heavy surf occasionally cut off all communication between yacht and shore for a fortnight at a time.

All the old navigators who furnished the descriptions of Trinidad in the South Atlantic Directory described the landing as extremely difficult and often quite impracticable on account of the almost perpetual surf, which breaks on the iron-bound coast. Landing in the lifeboat was often a dangerous operation at the best of times, and twice she was turned head over heels and swamped before she could reach the beach.

But after awhile we had landed our tent, tools, condensing apparatus, stores and all that was necessary, and had established quite a comfortable little settlement, surrounded by a barbed wire fence to keep off the land crabs ; then the digging was steadily carried on and many hundreds of tons of earth and rock were removed. We worked on until we were satisfied that further search was useless. We failed to find the treasure, but we had a very good try for it. To my companions I had explained from the beginning that the odds against our finding the treasure were rather heavy, and they bore their disappointment very well.

The men whom we did not want had been weeded out and I had round me at the end a crew tested and trained by their seven months' travels and hardships with whom one could go anywhere. They had toiled hard on the

shore in a most enervating climate, for the heat thrown out by the black volcanic debris at the bottom of the ravine in which we worked was far the most oppressive that I have experience in any part of the world. And they were the cheeriest crew that was ever got together, never grumbling and always on the best of terms with each other.

But to return to our adventures on the island. At first we anchored off the cascade, as we did in the *Falcon*. On the morning after our arrival the doctor and myself went on shore and spent two days in prospecting. We climbed to the summit of the island; thence had a difficult and dangerous descent to the windward side of Trinidad and came to South-west Bay. This lies under a peak called the Sugar Loaf, which rises steeply to the height of one thousand five hundred feet above the sea. Running down to this bay is the ravine, at a bend in which the treasure is supposed to be hidden, and here we found a small trench, a broken wheelbarrow and some picks, all that remained to show where the previous expedition had carried on its not very extensive work.

On the farther side of a spur of the mountain that bordered the bay, we came upon the ruins of a Portuguese penal settlement which, according to the records, had been abandoned for quite two hundred years. Here the beach and the lower slopes of the mountain sides were overgrown with a sturdy species of bean, and through this plantation flowed the largest stream that we had found on the island, no tiny trickle, but a regular little river of sparkling water. Near the river were the ruins of the Portuguese huts; of these only the walls of unhewn stone remained. They are built in terraces one above the other on the hillside. We found traces of roads leading to the huts, and walled in enclosures where the soil had been cleared of stones for purposes of cultivation.

We cooked some of these beans while camping that night and found them very palatable. It would be possible for men shipwrecked on this island to ward off starvation with the beans, the fish, and the turtle, which last lay their eggs on the sandy beaches. During our stay on the island, we had no difficulty in securing all the turtle we required.

There was a good deal of surf when we came to the natural pier under the cascade on the following morning. The boat came off to us and kept some distance off the shore outside the breakers. A line was thrown to us and jumping into the sea in turn we were hauled on board. For the next five days there was far too much sea to permit of a landing, but on the sixth day a few hands and some stores were put on shore in South-west Bay, and the work started. I weighed anchor and sailed round the intervening point, and anchored off South-west Bay, so as to be nearer the shore party and in view of our camp.

I found that to lie at anchor in the heavy seas that occasionally rolled into the bay greatly strained the *Alerte*, especially when the chain got foul of the rocks at the bottom, thus giving her a short nip. So I decided to anchor no longer but to heave to under snug canvas outside. This was a very easy matter. Our method was to sail out to sea from South-west Bay each evening until we had got a good offing and then we hove to under reefed mainsail, small jib with sheet to windward, and helm lashed. In the night the vessel would drift away about twelve miles towards the open sea. In the morning we would hoist the foresail and sail towards South-west Bay and communicate with the shore if possible with the signal code, for both the yacht and the shore party were provided with sets of signal flags. And so we stood off and on until the evening came, and it was time to sail seaward again and heave to. The shore party ran somewhat short of provisions once, so I sailed the *Alerte* the seven hundred miles to Bahia and back to do some marketing. When I got back to Bahia I found a strange flag flying over the town. Since our visit there a revolution had taken place. The Emperor Don Pedro had been deposed, and the Brazilian Republic had been proclaimed.

At the end of three months our work on shore was complete, the bad weather season had commenced, and it was only occasionally, with great difficulty and some risk to life that the lifeboat could put off. The *Alerte*, as she lay hove to outside, was nearly always rolling her scuppers under ; but at last we contrived to get all our stores safely on board, and on February 14 we bade farewell to Trinidad, and sailed away to its larger name-

sake, Trinidad in the West Indies, about three thousand miles distant.

Then our crew dispersed and returned home by various routes. There seemed to be a good chance of selling the *Alerte* well in Trinidad, so I left her there in charge of an agent. There had been thirteen hands all told on the *Alerte*, and we had sailed on a Friday, so according to superstitious people I deserved illl uck, and I certainly had my share of it now. An English doctor proposed to buy the *Alerte* and persuaded my agent to allow him to sail with her on a trial trip to Tobago before he had paid for her. On her way back this doctor attempted to sail through the Boca Chica, one of the channels that open into the Gulf of Paria. This channel is sown with pinnacles of rock and has a violent current sweeping through it. No sailor would attempt to use it unless he had power or a strong leading wind. This fool tried to drift through it in a calm. The poor old *Alerte* was carried by the tide on to one of the pinnacles of rock and she promptly sank in one hundred fathoms of water. I never received the purchase money.

Then on getting home I found that my flat had been burgled. I only recovered one of the articles that had been stolen—the gunmetal cannon that I had with me on the *Falcon*. The burglars had sold it to a foundry, and there we discovered it, sawn in two all ready for the melting pot. As I write this I see in the newspapers that another expedition is to sail from America early in 1923 to seek the treasure on Trinidad. In view of the difficulty of landing the party working on shore will be kept supplied by aeroplanes flying from the mainland.

When I got home I wrote the account of the treasure hunt in my book, " *The Cruise of the Alerte*." And now let me say a few words on the land crabs, whose habits I describe in that work. In " *The Cruise of the Falcon* " I had spoken of the uncanny tribe of crustacea which haunt this desolate isle. Then in a novel, " The Desperate Voyage," I brought the villain to Trinidad and he had some gruesome experiences with these creatures. Thereupon I was accused in several papers of having plagiarized them from Mr. Rider Haggard's " Allan Quartermain." My friend Rider Haggard had happened to read a quotation

in a review of the " Cruise of the *Falcon*," and this had suggested to him his use of my land crabs in " Allan Quartermain " ; this he frankly acknowledged in a preface to that book. But now again, after the publication of " *The Cruise of the Alerte*," the reviewers were at me again. The *Paternoster Review*, a Roman Catholic periodical, in a notice said that my land crabs were a weak *réchauffée* of the land crabs in " She," showing that the writer did not even know his Rider Haggard.

In addition to this, literary pickpockets who search books of travel to make up their own novels fell on the book. The most flagrant example of this appeared in a well-known periodical. The whole story of the treasure hunt was told at length in my own words by someone who purported not only to be the author, but the commander of the expedition. Of course the publisher of the magazine put this matter right.

This pirate had the cheek, by the way, to write to me later on for permission to publish in novel form my account of the Hunza Nagar campaign in " *Where Three Empires Meet*." But he was anticipated in doing this by two very well-known novelists who, in two novels, used up much of the description of the Gilgit Road and the little war on the frontier given in my book, in many places copying my own words, and even the conversations. They gave no acknowledgment of their indebtedness. *Punch*, in reviewing one of these novels, said that it contained the best account of a frontier campaign that the reviewer had ever read, and yet the author had never travelled in those regions, and had taken all his local colour from my book. " *Sic vos non vobis*."

It may be as well to mention these facts, for as it is of the Hunza Nagar Expedition that I am now about to write, I can thus answer in advance any charges of plagiarism that may be brought against me. I shall be able to prove that if I plagiarize at all I am plagiarizing from myself.

Having relieved myself by this grousing, let me turn to pleasanter things. For now the whole course of my life became changed. No longer was I to roam the seas as my own master, but I was to travel farther afield than ever, through many strange lands in war time, at the beck

of a great newspaper, sometimes to act as a combatant; in short, to have a most enjoyable time, doing the most interesting work, for which of course I was paid. My previous life had been no ill training for the career of a war correspondent.

Towards the close of 1890 my cousin Charles Spedding arrived from India to spend a few weeks in London. He is the well-known civil engineer whose principal work has been done in a remote but very important corner of our Empire, the extreme North-west of India, where he was engaged in the construction of strategical roads among the highest mountains in the world, across the passes of the Himalayas and through the defiles of the Hindu Kush to the borders of the desolate Pamirs, the roof of the world. He was at that time constructing the famous Gilgit road that leads from Kashmir to the northernmost outpost of India, Gilgit. His description of those wild regions fired my imagination, and when he asked me to return to the scene of his labours with him and attach myself temporarily to his roadmaking staff, I gladly availed myself of his invitation, all the more so when he explained to me that later in the year a war with the tribesmen of that portion of the frontier was more than probable.

So I went to *The Times*, talked over my proposed journey with Mr. Moberley Bell, and made an arrangement whereby I should act as *Times* correspondent while in Kashmir. I was away for a year, one of the happiest and most interesting of my life. It was a very active year for me, for I was nearly always travelling on horseback or on foot, generally the latter, covering some thousands of miles among the high mountains, often crossing passes of seventeen thousand feet in height above the sea, never out of sight of ice and snow, and often marching across them for many days or weeks at a time. I saw but little of India or the Happy Valley of Kashmir, for almost all the time I was wandering to the north of the Himalayas.

We started early in the New Year. It had been a winter of unexampled severity and the snowfall on the Himalayas had averaged forty feet. When we reached Murray, the hill station, we found it deserted, for most of the bungalows were snowed up to their roofs, and the snow was lying

eight feet deep in the streets. We pushed on, crossed the frontier between British India and the State of the Maharajah of Kashmir, and entered the beautiful Vale of Kashmir—that delightful oasis that is curiously embedded in the midst of the rugged Himalayan system, a vast and most fertile plain watered by many lakes and rivers, surrounded by far away dim, snowy ranges. Surely no land on earth can equal in beauty this flower-studded vale in the early spring.

Wonderful it was in the early morning as one looked beyond the sea of verdure and the placid lakes to see around one, far off, the wall of mighty mountains enclosing the plain with wastes of perpetual snow, the purple crags and the snows merging into similarly coloured clouds, so that one could not distinguish where mountain ended and cloud commenced : a mysterious effect as if the encircling Himalayas were the limit of this lower world and that over yonder were the gigantic steps into the heavens.

The Indian Government had lent to the Kashmir Government some selected civil servants to superintend the much-needed reforms in the administration of the country and thereby avoid its threatened bankruptcy. The Settlement Officer to the State of Kashmir was Mr. W. R. Lawrence. He kindly invited me to join him on one of his official tours. As it was too early yet to cross the Himalayas, I gladly availed myself of this invitation. So one cloudless morning, fresh as it might have been in Paradise in the youth of the world, we cantered across the plain, thickly covered with blue iris in full flower, followed by our attendants. It was very interesting to see this able officer at work. He always held his court in the open air either under a wide spreading tree or in some pleasant orchard, and like a caliph in the " Arabian Nights," he used to dispense justice to the surrounding crowd of suppliants.

All the soil in Kashmir is the property of the Maharajah. The *assami*, or hereditary farmers, paid as revenue to the Maharajah two-thirds of their crops. But a far smaller fraction than the supposed two-thirds reached the state, and a very meagre proportion, in fact just sufficient to support existence, went to the cultivator, while the great bulk was swallowed by the grasping tax-collectors

and other middlemen who stood between the state and the cultivator. It was the work of our Settlement Officer to put a stop to these abuses, and by patient labour he was succeeding. The decisions of the *bandobast wallah*, as the natives call the settlement officer, were accepted without question by the natives, for they had implicit faith in his justice and wisdom. How very few people at home know of what sort of men our Indian Civil service is composed, how arduous is their work, what vast responsibilities are theirs ; how, above all suspicion themselves, they inspire the corrupt natives with an absolute confidence in their integrity. India is surely a school for administrators such as the world has never seen.

The *assami* employed all sorts of curious tricks to attract the sympathy of the Settlement Officer. Thus at one Court which we attended two suppliants came up who had carefully got themselves up in pitiable plight. These two big men had stripped themselves naked save for the loin cloth, and had smeared their bodies all over with foul mud from the river bed. Even their hair and faces were thickly covered with the filth, through which their eyes glittered comically. They came up and stood before the Settlement Officer, salaamed, and then suddenly and of one accord commenced to weep, groan and shriek most dismally, while they writhed their bodies as in agony. Mr. Lawrence gave a peremptory word and they ceased their buffoonery as suddenly as they had commenced it.

Their story was that while working in their fields an official had taken from them by force some grass straw of the value of twopence. The said official, moreover, had plucked their beards, in evidence of which each of them produced two or three hairs which they affirmed had been pulled out. Once in Srinagar itself Mr. Lawrence, on coming out of his bungalow, found a strange object in front of his door, surrounded by a contemplative crowd. He discovered that this was an ancient naked *pundit* standing on his head. The acrobatic sage had thrown aside his garments and was thus patiently balancing himself while he awaited the settlement *sahib's* coming out. Mr. Lawrence ordered him to be turned right side up, and the case was forthwith dealt with. On one occasion a weeping man appeared carrying a small bundle

which emitted a dreadful odour. On being asked what he desired, he cried out: "Oh, *sahib*, I have returned from the Punjab to my native village, but they will not give me back my land. Here in this bundle is my dead child, and I have not so much as a bit of ground in which to bury the body."

With two soldiers with lances riding ahead of us, we visited village after village, and Mr. Lawrence quickly settled every question that arose, such as the over-assessment by an hereditary tax collector, or complaints by cultivators on the plain that others on the hillside were taking too great a share of the water that is carried down by the irrigation canals. After about a fortnight's most interesting tour through the Vale of Kashmir with Mr. Lawrence, I returned to Srinagar. It was still too early in the year for Spedding to commence his roadmaking, and he was occupied in buying horses in Kashmir and organizing the transport of his stores.

On the way up country from India I had the good fortune and pleasure of meeting Captain Bower of the 17th Bengal Cavalry, the well-known traveller and explorer in Central Asia, who was then organizing his extraordinary expedition across Tibet. Many years later, as Major-General Sir Hamilton Bower, he was with the famous expedition that entered the hitherto mysterious closed city of Llassah. A previous remarkable exploit of Bower's was his hunting down of Dad Mahomet. The Indian Government had asked Bower to track down this man, an Afghan merchant of Leh, who had murdered the English traveller Dalgleish on the Karakoram Pass, and had escaped into Turkestan with his Pathan followers. All that Bower was told as to the whereabouts of the fugitive was to the effect that he was somewhere in Central Asia. Bower, accompanied by two Dogra officers and a few sepoys, soon got on the track of the fugitive, and proceeded to hunt him up and down those regions. For the murderer got wind of Bower's intentions and evidently did not consider himself to be safe in any part of Central Asia; he travelled rapidly backwards and forwards over enormous distances, often under an assumed name, and was heard of in Bokhara and Balkh, as well as in the cities of China.

The Chinese authorities refused to take any steps in the matter, so the exciting chase continued. The trade routes, the only praticable roads over the thinly-populated regions of Central Asia, form telephones as it were of news, and Dad Mahomet was always well informed as to the movements of so conspicuous a personage as a European traveller.

After much vain stalking Bower changed his tactics ; he made his plans to drive Dad Mahomet into a previously laid trap in Russian territory. First he sent one of the Dogra officers and another man to Samarcund with definite instructions. Then with the rest of his handful of followers he energetically followed up the Afghan, allowing him no rest, and, at last, by turning his line of flight, compelled him to go into Samarcund. There Bower's Dogra officer recognized his prey, went off to the Russian General, and produced Bower's letter. The Russian General at once sent his Cossacks to arrest the man, who was carried to the prison. Bower was anxious to march the prisoner into India through Kashgaria and Kashmir, as a good example to other ruffians in those parts. But permission to do so had to be obtained from Russia, and in the meanwhile Dad Mahomet solved the knotty problem by hanging himself in his cell. The story of this successful drive spread through the bazaars of Central Asia and caused a great impression. " How far-reaching," men would say to one another, " is the arm of the Indian *Sirkar !* It can even stretch across Kashmir to seize and destroy in the depths of Asia the man who has had the temerity to slay a *sahib*.

CHAPTER X

Captain Bower. On the road to Tibet.—Across the Himalayas.—The Immortals.—Leh.—The devil dance.—The Hindu Kush.—Across country to Gilgit.—Raids on the Gilgit road.—The punitive expedition.

CAPTAIN BOWER invited me to accompany him to the frontier of Tibet, about two hundred and eighty miles or twenty-one marches distant. Having seen him across the frontier I could then cross the mountains to Gilgit at the farther end of Kashmir, and there again come in touch with Spedding. I gladly availed myself of the opportunity of travelling in Bower's company. This road to Leh is the great trade route between India and Yarkand via the Karakoram Pass, but it was then but a rough bridle track, dangerous for ponies at certain points. According to reports, our journey across the Himalayas would be somewhat difficult. There would be several marches across soft snow, and the *nullah* up which we had to ascend to the Zoji La Pass was blocked by a gigantic curtain of precipitous snow and ice, up which it would be necessary to cut a zigzag path with ice-axes before it would be possible for horses to effect the ascent.

Bower brought seventeen horses with him which had to be well fed, and were exempted from carrying loads until Tibet was reached ; he had a number of followers who were to accompany him, men from Turkestan, half-bred Argoons and others, and he had also two thoroughly reliable natives of India with him, a young rajpoot of good family, and Bower's Pathan orderly, distinguished from the swarthy, stunted Tartars by their tall figures and handsome Aryan features. All our baggage and the stores for Bower's expedition were carried by relays of coolies, gathered from the villages through which we passed. For our first five marches we ascended the Sind Valley, and on our third day's march we got into the frozen land, our way leading along great accumulations of snow that filled the bottom of the ravine. Occasionally we had to wade in the icy river between snow cliffs thirty feet in height, and pass under bridges of snow. The

scenery was wild in the extreme, but a little later in the season when the roses, jasmine and honeysuckle, which grow in profusion amid the knee-deep grass, are in flower, this is one of the fairest valleys on earth.

On our fifth day out we crossed the Himalayas by the Zoji La Pass. One has to pick one's weather carefully to cross a Himalayan pass in winter or spring, and when one does get a slant, as they say at sea, one must hurry over quickly, for the fierce winds that spring up suddenly sometimes destroy whole caravans of travellers with their deadly cold. A month or so earlier three hundred mules and their drivers were thus overtaken and lost on the Gilgit road. The Zohi La is the lowest depression in the Western Himalayas, being only eleven thousand five hundred feet above the sea, and through this profound gap the wind concentrating often blows with great fury. The ascent of the pass is almost perpendicular, but the descent into Ladak is very gradual. The wind howled and the snow fell through the night at our last camp at the foot of the pass. Our guide, who had been keenly watching the weather, woke us at four in the morning and said that we could now start, as the old snow would be frozen hard for a few hours. We reached the summit before the sun had arisen and softened the snow, and after a long and tedious march reached an empty hut on the farther side of the pass, and only five hundred feet beneath it.

And now we were in a new country, for the stupendous natural barrier of the Himalayas divides regions widely differing in every respect. South of the range is one of the most fertile regions of the earth. To the north of it is the rainless desert. In Kashmir there is a heavy rainfall and a heavy snowfall. But the rain clouds from the south brought by the monsoon from the distant seas are intercepted by this lofty range. Consequently Kashmir is a green land of woods and pastures, while on crossing the Zoji La one suddenly enters the bleak wastes of Central Asia, where there is practically no rainfall, and where the snow in winter is so light that at sixteen thousand feet above the sea none is found lying in the summer. The mountains too sharply separate races differing from each other as much as do the English from the Chinese. To

the south of the range is the land of the Aryan peoples. North of it in Western Tibet or Ladak, the country we were now entering, the inhabitants are of Mongolian stock and Buddhists.

Ladak is a desert of bare crags and granite dust and vast arid tablelands of great elevation, where one can march a long summer's day and never see a blade of grass, but in which in the valleys, by means of little canals bringing down water from the high snows, small patches of granite dust are irrigated and carefully cultivated here and there—tiny green oases so sharply defined from the surrounding desolation that they look like bits of another country cut out with a pair of scissors and dropped into the desert. Ladak can boast of being the highest inhabited country in the world.

Grain is cultivated at fifteen thousand feet and Leh, the capital, is eleven thousand five hundred feet above the sea. The highlanders complain of suffocation when they descend to the Vale of Kashmir, and would die if they stayed long in its dense air. But this region is fascinating in an extraordinary degree ; so strange are the ways of the inhabitants that one feels as if walking in an enchanted land and the numerous ecclesiastical buildings fully support this impression.

The Buddhist of this region has a love for the horrible and the grotesque. He builds his monastery on the summit of some almost inaccessible pinnacle or burrows into the face of some frightful precipice. Doré would have found inspiration in these great and weird edifices. The country itself is naturally fantastic, and the fantastic inhabitants do all they can to assist nature and make their surroundings still more fantastic than they are. In many of these lamaseries the abbots are *skooshoks* (incarnations) who absolutely believe—as do all the people in the country—that they themselves have been abbots of these monasteries from the time when we British were naked savages, having passed through many successive incarnations.

I met some of these immortals who had communed with Buddha. On the road one constantly meets the shaven red-robed lamas, and everywhere one sees the praying machinery—the *manis*, long walls of praying stones ; the praying flags waving on the housetops ; the

chortens wherein the ashes of dead saints are contained ; the praying waterwheels. He who uses these things properly has the periods of purgatory lessened for him, and so brings his soul by some space of time nearer Nirvana.

We marched down some fearful defiles and crossed two passes, the Namika La and the Fotu La, thirteen thousand and thirteen thousand four hundred feet above the sea, but though they were so much higher than the Zoji La, no snow lay in them. We found the mild Buddhists very pleasant and kindly, but it astonished our Mussulman followers to notice the bold independence of the women and the way they bullied their husbands ; for a Ladaki woman, who is often the heiress to the land, can divorce a husband at will. She is rich in husbands, for polyandry is the custom of the country, and the wife is frequently married to three brothers.

At last we reached the broad valley of the Indus and entered the city of Leh. Here my Indian *khansamah*, who spoke a little English, left me, for like many I met he was afraid of the march to Gilgit that was before him.

" It was a dangerous road to travel," he said, " with plenty of bad men on it."

From Leh we made two marches up the *nullah*, and were present at the wonderful yearly mystery play in Himis Lamasery, which contains quite eight hundred monks and nuns. For two days the lamas, disguised with grotesque masks, engage in a complicated mummery in the courtyard of the monastery, and present the famous devil dance. The principal motive of this mystery play appears to be the lesson that the helpless naked soul of man has its being in the midst of a vast and obscure space full of malignant demons perpetually seeking to destroy it, harassing it with horrors and terrors, and that against this infinite oppression of the powers of evil he can of himself do nothing ; but that occasionally the exorcisms of the lamas may come to his assistance and shield him, and then only after a fierce and doubtful contest between the saints and the devils.

And only for a time can this relief from persecution endure ; for all the exorcisms of all the saints are of little avail to keep back the advancing hordes. The shrieking

demons must soon close in upon the soul again. But I cannot here attempt to describe this two days' complicated ceremony which is accompanied by wierd and impressive music of *shawms*, brazen wind instruments, cymbals, gongs, and rattles made of human bones.

As we approached Himis we formed part of a great struggling crowd travelling up the narrow path in the same direction as ourselves, nearly all mounted and dressed in their gayest attire, people from every part of Central Asia, Tibetans, red lamas from distant lamaseries, and yellow lamas from Llassa, a motley and lively procession; a sort of Tibetan version of a Canterbury pilgrimage. Snow fell during the performance; and on the crags around us we saw ibex standing, for these are protected by the lamas, a fact evidently well known to these most timid of beasts.

On the morning of June 17, Bower with his following left Himis to cross the Chang La and plunge into the unknown world. I was the last European they were to see until they had crossed mysterious Tibet, and a year later had fallen in with the missionaries in China proper. I then returned to Leh, engaged coolies, and, Babu Khan having left me, promoted my Kashmeri follower Subhana to the rank of *khansamah* and factotum. By the track I intended to follow Gilgit is nearly four hundred miles, or thirty-two marches, from Leh. It was a lonely, seldom used track, not a trade route like the one I had followed so far, but a very rough way, impracticable for horses. To march along it gives the traveller plenty of exercise, for it is a very up and down road, varying from four thousand four hundred to seventeen thousand feet above the sea. The road crosses an intricate mass of mountains cloven by the deep gorges of the Indus and its tributaries.

It was an arduous but very interesting journey. We set out on June 27, and on July 4 we crossed the summit of the Chorbat La, a pass sixteen thousand seven hundred feet above the sea. For the last two thousand feet or so we had to ascend a slope of forty-five degrees, deeply covered with soft snow. From the summit, looking north, I could distinguish the details of an immense landscape—hundreds of leagues of snowfields, and the greatest glaciers on earth, filling valleys fifty miles in length. We saw

some stupendous mountains rising above the lower ranges, peaks of the Karakoram range forming the frontier of Chinese Turkestan. Many of these summits exceeded, twenty-five thousand feet, and one, K.2 attained twenty-eight thousand two hundred and sixty-five feet, the loftiest mountain in the world save Mount Everest.

We had now left Buddhist Ladak and on descending the farther side of the pass we entered Baltistan, or Little Tibet, and were among the simple ugly Baltis, a good-natured cheery people, who are of the Mohammedan faith. On the following day we descended to the valley of the Shayok, and came from hard wintry weather to hot summer. In the irrigated plots of the rare villages were little fields of corn, peas and lucerne, and in the orchards the mulberries, apricots and other fruits were ripening. But after leaving Skardu, the old fortress-capped capital of Baltistan, we had to ascend again ten thousand feet, and were once more on wind-swept heights, amid the sleet and snow.

We had another high pass to cross, the Bannok La, seventeen thousand feet above the sea. We had to wait for three days, encamped on a bleak plateau, while the storm swept over us, until the weather cleared sufficiently to allow us to face the pass. On reaching the summit we found that we still had great undulating downs of snow and glaciers to cross before the descent into safety began. On the following day we came into summer again, and into a more pleasing valley than any I had seen for a long time ; pine woods and flowery pastures covered the hill sides.

And at a turn of this valley I saw a wonderful scene in front of me. Rising above the lower ranges into the cloudless blue sky was a huge white mass, such a mountain as I had never beheld before ; not a sharp pinnacle this, but shaped like a hog's back, a prone Titan. The snowy domes were piled one upon the other, and flashing glaciers leagues in length streaked the furrowed sides. This I knew to be Nanga Parbat, twenty-six thousand six hundred and twenty-nine feet in height, about twenty miles distant. The range of which it is the culminating point forms the frontier of the Maharajah's territories, for beyond it is the country of the Chilas tribesmen, at

that time unexplored, into which no stranger might venture.

We encamped at a little hamlet three or four leagues from Astor, and I soon knew that I was in the vicinity of the dreaded Gilgit road. The coolies that I had with me had been engaged to accompany me to this spot. The *lumbadar* of the hamlet could not supply me with a fresh relay of coolies, for he said that all the villagers had been seized for *begar* (forced labour) on the Gilgit road. I promised much *baksheesh* to the coolies who had come with me if they would carry my baggage to Astor ; but they knelt at my feet and implored me with tears in their eyes to spare them, for they feared lest at Astor they would be seized and sent on the road as *begari*, probably not to return to their wives and families for many months, if ever. I therefore discharged them and leaving my luggage in charge of Subhana, walked into Astor to procure transport from the authorities.

I came to where the *nullah* I was following debouched upon the valley of Astor and saw the towered walls of the fort in front of me, and along the dusty slope of the valley I perceived what appeared to be a mere scratch on the dry earth, and I knew that I was looking at the dreary road of slavery, the hated track to Gilgit, and even as I looked I saw a long string of ragged men bending under sacks of grain toiling slowly northwards through clouds of dust.

The constant raids upon the Gilgit roads necessitated the establishment of strong garrisons at Astor and other places, and the system of *begar* was cruelly enforced on the population ; for many thousands of coolies were needed to bring up the supplies for the troops. The road from Kashmir to Gilgit was roughly two hundred and forty miles in length, a dreadful track during the few summer months that it was open. It traversed a desert country ; even the grass with which to feed the transport animals had to be brought from a distance. In summer the heat in the narrow gorges is intense and on some of the waterless marches the bones of dead men and mules were frequently to be seen. Two passes had to be crossed on which in spring or autumn numbers of travellers perished every year, overtaken by sudden gales of deadly coldness.

Since the Indian Government had taken over the supervision of affairs in the Kashmir State things had gone better. The raids of the tribes were being held in check. The inhabitants were returning to their deserted villages and cultivation again was coming to the walled terraces of dry earth, and dead fruit trees, which alone showed where were the green and laboriously irrigated oases. The raiders used to carry away crops and cattle, kill the men, and make slaves of the women and children. The Chilas tribesmen who occupy the Indus Valley were the principal offenders.

That until recently the tribes were able to defy the power of Kashmir was due to the utterly corrupt system of administration that prevailed in the state. Great loss of life, a fearful sum of human misery, a vast waste of state funds, and all with no result—such was the history of the Gilgit road up to the inauguration of the wise policy by which the defences of Gilgit were put into the hands of a British agency. In the place of a large useless rabble of Kashmir regulars, a small force of Kashmir Imperial Service troops, trained by British officers, now garrisoned Gilgit. The forced labour, which of course could not be stopped at once, else the garrisons would starve, was being regulated.

The strategical road, which Spedding and Co. were then constructing between Srinagar and Gilgit, would greatly facilitate transport, and render *begar* unnecessary. A regular transport service was to be organized. Carts would be able to use this mountain road, whereas the old rough track was so narrow that two mules meeting could not pass each other save at certain points, and it was impossible for a mountain mule battery to travel along it. The value of Gilgit to the State, commanding as it does all the valleys held by the unruly tribes on either side, is obvious ; but it was also realized that it was of great strategical importance to the Empire. Russia at that time was exploring the passes of the Hindu Kush, and her Cossacks had crossed the mountains both into Chitral and Hunza, stirring up the people against us. Now Gilgit, our northernmost outpost, covered the passes that threatened Kashmir.

I found that there were no Englishmen in Astor, but was informed that a gang of navvies under Mr. Appleford, of Spedding's staff, were working on the new road four miles lower down the valley. So I walked there, found Appleford, was welcomed by him and heard all the news—Spedding was in Kashmir organizing transport, the Hunza Nagars had attempted a raid into Kashmir territory, but were repulsed by the Gilgit force, which had occupied the frontier fort of Chalt. I was now in what was called Dardistan, which includes the districts of Astor and Gilgit, the little kingdoms of Hunza and Nagar, and the independent republics of the Indus Valley below Boonji. The Dards are Mohammedans, of a sturdy Aryan stock, a cheery people, braver than their neighbours, who meet one without servility on the one hand, or impertinent self-assertion on the other hand ; in short, a people to be liked and respected, and as different in every way from their neighbours as are the English from the Chinese.

The engineers of Spedding's staff were at that time scattered along the two hundred and forty miles of road each with a gang of navvies working with pick and dynamite on the section of the road allotted to him. About five thousand navvies were employed on the construction, the majority of whom were tall, handsome Afghans, who had been robbers and murderers in their own land, but were jovial, courageous, and independent. These truculent Pathans placed complete confidence in the justice of the *sahibs*, and it was wonderful to see in what good order they were kept by a handful of British. We did not speak of the coming punitive expedition before the natives, for had the tribesmen of Hunza Nagar entertained a suspicion of it they might have fallen on Gilgit and attacked the little garrison before our preparations were complete.

There was time for me to fill up before anything was doing, so I walked the nine marches from Astor to Gilgit, accomplishing the journey in six days. The march to Ranghat is the stage most dreaded by the coolies, and it is indeed a ghastly one. Here the mountain for a height of six thousand feet has fallen in, and a huge landslip of debris and boulders piled one on the other slopes down to

the torrent below at a dangerously steep angle. Showers of rock often sweep down these slopes, and large portions of the mountain above at times fall away. How the new road was to be constructed across this ever shifting incline it was difficult to see. Travellers and their beasts were constantly being swept off the old track by falling rocks, and later on, when the navvies were at work here, thirty men were soon killed, having been struck by the avalanches of stones, or precipitated into the abyss by the crumbling away of their foothold. Pleasant it was after that long scramble up and down those miles of hot boulders, to reach the torrent and quench one's thirst in that delicious, icy water. My camping place that night was a few miles farther down the gorge, but the coolies with the baggage did not come in that night, for, succumbing to thirst and weariness, they remained by the river.

The next day I crossed the Indus near the point where it leaves Kashmir territory to enter the unexplored Shinaka country, whence used to come the dreaded raids. The broad Indus Valley, once well cultivated, had become an arid desert ; but two days later, when we reached the Gilgit Valley, I found myself in a very well cultivated oasis. The water was running down every little irrigation canal, and I was walking through orchards of ripe peaches, under clusters of purple grapes, and along fields of maize, rice, millet, and Indian hemp ; and one realized the possibilities of this arid country, once life and property were secure. The proximity of the British agency secured for this district immunity from the oppressions of the Kashmir Government, as well as from Yagistan raids.

I came to the bungalow of the British Agency, standing amid well kept grounds, and was welcomed by Colonel Durand and his staff. I stayed three days in Gilgit, and formed some idea of the excellent work that had already been accomplished. Here the garrison consisted of thirty men of the 26th Punjab Infantry, who formed the British Agent's bodyguard, and Imperial Service troops of the Maharajah's army. The important native states shortly before this had placed certain portions of their armies at the disposal of our government for purposes of Imperial defence, the drilling and training of the men being supervised by selected British officers. The State of Kashmir

had supplied three regiments of Imperial Service troops, and a mule battery, in all about two thousand Gurkhas and Dogras.

I decided to travel down the Gilgit road to Srinagar to replenish my kit. The heat was intense in the gorges, for it was mid-August. Daily I met trains of coolies and laden animals northward bound, and at frequent intervals Spedding's Pathans were busy on the road construction. I crossed the Himalayas by the Borzil Pass, thirteen thousand five hundred feet, over which the new road had been completed during the two or three weeks that it was clear of snow. At the summit one crosses a long exposed down for several miles on which in winter to be overtaken by the icy wind signifies probable death to the traveller. A large number of lives are lost here annually, and after the snow has melted in the summer the dead bodies of men and animals are to be seen lying by the wayside.

On September 7 I crossed the Rajdiangan Pass which, though only eleven thousand eight hundred feet above the sea, is more dreaded then the Borzil in the winter months. I reached Srinagar, stayed there awhile enjoying civilization for a change, and then set out to retrace my steps along the twenty-two marches to Gilgit. But this time I was bringing up stores and horses for Spedding, and so was able to ride all the way. I found snow on the passes and realized that summer was done. There was a good deal of snow at Astor when I reached it, and it seemed that winter was setting in at an exceptionally early date that year. I heard that two hundred men of the 5th Gurkhas regiment from Abbotabad and two guns of the 9th Hazara Mountain Battery were proceeding to Gilgit, but none suspected yet that an expedition was contemplated.

Natives whom I met on the road gravely informed me that the Empress of India had sold two hundred of her sepoys and two hill guns to the Maharajah. News came that the Gurkhas had been delayed by cholera and had lost sixteen men. So far luck seemed to be against Colonel Durand. The crossing of the passes was becoming dangerous, and of grain alone many thousands of coolie loads were still on the other side of the mountains. The Borzil had already commenced to levy its annual tribute

of life, for many men and horses were lying dead on the pass.

However, the first and second detachments of Gurkhas with their transport, and also the seven-pound guns of the Hazara Battery reached us safely on October 27 and 28, but on the following day the third detachment of the Gurkhas arrived at Astor in a pitiable condition. A blizzard had overtaken it on the Borzil and about one hundred men, most of whom were of the transport service, had been frost-bitten, several losing hands and feet. The majority of these died at Astor of tetanus and gangrene. Captain Barrett, who was in command of the Gurkhas, had also been frost-bitten while urging on the numbed and despairing transport men, who would otherwise have lain down to die in the snow. He lost several of his toes. The expedition thus lost the services of a most valuable officer. The Borzil was now strewn with the corpses of coolies, and the campaign that followed was attended with far less loss of life than was the preparation for it. Moltke was wise when hearing some of his officers talk in a disparaging strain of the little wars of the British, he said: "You must remember, gentlemen, that the British officers in India do not go to the front in first-class railway carriages."

CHAPTER XI

Hunza Nagar.—The slave hunters.—The Pathan roadmakers.—The Thum's letters.—Advance of expeditionary force.—The battle of Nilt.—The blowing up of the gate.—Two V.C.'s won.—Checked.—Reconnaissances.

THE allied States of Hunza and Nagar comprise the valleys draining into the upper portion of the Kanjut or Hunza River, which flows into the Gilgit River two miles below Gilgit. These valleys are buried in a gigantic mountain system containing some of the highest peaks of the Hindu Kush. Surrounded by granite precipices, huge wastes of snow, and the greatest glaciers of the world, Hunza Nagar has but one vulnerable point, the junction of the Kanjut and Gilgit ravines. Even this narrow entrance is closed to the invader during the summer months, for then the river, swollen by the melting snows, becomes an unfordable torrent, overflowing the whole valley bottom at many points, so that the only way left by which one can ascend the gorge is by rough tracks high up the hill sides carried along narrow ledges, a road fit only for cragsmen, which could be easily held by a handful of men against a large force. The Hunzas and Nagars occupy opposite sides of the torrent, and when not united against a common enemy were generally at war with each other.

The Kanjuts, as the Hunza Nagars are called by their neighbours, numbered about five thousand well armed fighting men, and had for centuries been the terror of all the people between Afghanistan and Yarkand. They used to cross the passes of the Hindu Kush to raid on the trade routes of Central Asia, and many a caravan on its way from India has been waylaid and pillaged. The *Thums* or rulers of these two petty states derived the greater portion of their revenue from this source.

They also engaged in a systematized slave dealing. Men, women and children captured in their raids were sold to slave owners in Chinese Turkestan or to the Kirghiz dealers. Entire outlying garrisons of Kashmir sepoys have been surprised and carried into captivity by these daring ruffians. The *Thum* of Hunza boasts of

being the descendant of Alexander the Great by a fairy of the Hindu Kush. Captain Gromschevtsky had recently visited the Hunza valley with a party of Cossacks. He undoubtedly left the impression in the valley that the Russians were ready to help the Kanjuts against us. It was time to give these truculent people a lesson. The Indian Government was ready to condone previous offences, but decided to ensure the safety of our garrisons for the future by erecting a new fort at Chalt, and by extending the Gilgit road to Hunza.

So an ultimatum to this effect was now sent by Colonel Durand to the *Thums*. To judge from their antecedents the Kanjuts were likely to offer resistance, and in all probability we should find a foe not to be despised. Spedding now withdrew two hundred of his Pathans from work on the Gilgit Road and placed them at the disposal of Colonel Durand for the construction of the road up the Hunza valley. The selected Pathans were armed with Sniders. They were in the highest spirits; they did not know against whom they were to be asked to fight, and they did not much care. "It must be the Russians we are going to war with," they were heard to say to each other, and they evidently relished the idea of having a brush with the Cossack. The winter was advancing; the passes were closed. A great deal of the expected grain never came to us. Our officers had done their utmost to have all ready in time, but the delays caused by the early winter, the cholera outbreak, and the bad arrangements made by the Kashmir Durbar, were matters beyond Colonel Durand's control.

The entire force now at Colonel Durand's disposal consisted of one hundred and eighty men of the 5th Gurkha regiment, two guns of the Hazara mountain battery, twenty-eight men of the 20th Punjab Infantry, three regiments of Kashmir Imperial Service troops, a few sappers and miners, and one hundred and sixty irregulars from Punial, a semi-independent little Dard State in the upper Gilgit valley, who had been armed with Snider carbines, but who also carried their native swords and shields, in all about two thousand men. But with these he had to garrison Gilgit, Boonji and Astor, and hold all the posts on our long line of communication

which, for several marches, was exposed to the attacks of the Shinaka tribesmen. Consequently only one thousand men could be spared for operations beyond Chalt, indeed a small force with which to carry out this enterprise, with five thousand Kanjuts opposed to us and several thousands of tribesmen west of Bunji waiting for the chance to swell the number of our enemies should any reverse befall us.

On November 17, Spedding's two hundred Pathans set to work to construct a road up the Hunza valley as far as our farthermost outpost Chalt. All these Pathans had seen fighting in their time, in raids and in tribal wars, many had fought against us, some had fought as sepoys under us, for it was noticed that these understood the English words of command. In order to avoid confusion in case of a surprise, Colonel Durand ordered that they should be divided into six little companies, each under one of Spedding's staff as officer. I had two gangs under me, thirty-three men in all, all natives of Cabul. One of the contractors under me was known to his companions under the pleasant nickname of " the murderer." To have earned such a title among so many cut-throats he must have been indeed a man with a record.

The enemy, as our spies informed us, were not idle. They had strengthened the defences of Nilt, their nearest fortress, had sent the women and children of Nilt into the mountains, had burnt all the stacked grass, and destroyed all such roads as there were between Chalt and Nilt. On November 30 a reply came in to Colonel Durand's ultimatum. The *Thums* stated that they would have no roads in their countries and boasted of their capacity to resist us until the spring, when the Russians had promised to come to their assistance.

The correspondence that had been carried on between the *Thum* of Hunza and Colonel Durand contained much curious oriental imagery. In one letter the *Thum* asked why the British were straying into his country like camels without nose rings. In another letter he declared that he cared nothing for the womanly English as he hung upon the skirts of the manly Russians, and he warned Colonel Durand that he had given orders to his followers to bring him the Gilgit agent's head on a platter ; and in another

he said, " I have been tributary to China for hundreds of years. Trespass into China if you dare. If you venture here be prepared to fight three nations, Hunza, China and Russia. We will cut your head off, Colonel Durand, and then report you to the Indian Government."

The troops and grain coolies poured into Chalt until our whole force was concentrated there, and on December 1 we crossed the river by the temporary winter bridge that Captain Aylmer had constructed, and were in the enemy's country. Our baggage was now cut down to a minimum, one coolie being allotted to each officer. The few tents and extra impedimenta that we had brought with us were stored in Chalt Fort, and one had to limit oneself to one's sleeping sack, a spare flannel shirt, and such like absolute necessaries.

That night the force encamped within a *zareba*, the *kotal* or high spur of the mountain that falls into the river a short distance higher up the valley being held by Lieutenant Widdicombe and fifty men. Colonel Durand had in all sixteen British officers under him, all young men, keen, picked frontier soldiers, skilled mountaineers, as hardy and cheery a lot of youngsters as ever fought for England. More than thirty years have passed since then, and of these high-spirited subalterns some have become generals, some have earned renown in bigger wars, and some have been killed. There was Townshend, the life of the camp with his song and merry banjo, which ever accompanied him, now Major-General Townshend. There was Aylmer, who was to win his V.C. on the following day, now Lieutenant-General Aylmer. There was Colin Mackenzie, now Major-General Sir Colin Mackenzie, and Badcock, now Brigadier-General.

It was still dark on December 2 when the bugles sounded the réveillé. Aylmer and his sappers, accompanied by some of Spedding's Pathans, marched with the advanced guard of 5th Gurkhas to clear away the obstructions on the road. The crossing of the eight hundred feet high *kotal* by the one thousand soldiers and two thousand coolies was a tedious undertaking, and by the time we had descended to the farther side it was broad daylight. From the *kotal* we could see the towers

of Nilt eight miles distant ; we advanced in line of columns across the stony plain. We had to cross two side *nullahs*, chasms with perpendicular sides, the tracks across which had been broken down by the enemy, so there was no way of getting by until our sappers and navvies had been at work for some time with pick and dynamite. And even then the hastily made path was dangerous, and at least one ammunition mule rolled over the precipice to the bottom of the *nullah*, bringing down with him an avalanche of large rocks and cases of ammunition, killing himself and injuring several men. Our advance I need not say was being conducted with due precautions ; a party of Gurkhas and Punialis crowned the heights as we moved on. We saw no signs of the enemy, but could hear the beating of their tomtoms and their shoutings in the distant forts. At last we reached the cultivated terraces of Nilt, across which the force advanced in quarter columns.

The villagers lived within the fort, which was a very rabbit warren of strongly built stone houses with narrow alleys between them. The village was enclosed within a great wall fifteen to twenty feet in height, and twelve feet thick. The flat roofs of this fortified village were covered with large stones and were so well constructed that they were proof against our shell when dropped upon them, while guns of much greater calibre than our seven pounders would have failed to make any impression on the massive wall. Another wall, also loopholed, eight feet in height, surrounded the main wall. A steep water-course served as a trench to that side of the fort that faced us, and here a strong *abattis* of branches had been placed to oppose us. Now it was a question of capturing this strongly defended place in the course of a few hours, or retiring. The enemy had cut off the canals which irrigated their cultivated terraces. The bed of the river, some hundreds of feet beneath us, was an absolutely untenable position. In short, Nilt had to be captured before our men, who had exhausted their water bottles, could satisfy their thirst.

It was past one o'clock when, on turning a projecting spur of the mountain we saw the walls and towers of Nilt right in front of us and close by. There suddenly

burst out a loud rattling of musketry from the loopholes of the fort and the *sangas* on the hillside. Then the 5th Gurkhas, who led the attack under their three officers, advanced quickly over the broken ground, section after section, making short rushes, and opened a brisk fire at short range on the loopholes of the fort. The Punialis swarmed up the height on which our ridge blockhouse was afterwards constructed, and fired down on the defenders of the fort.

In the meanwhile, Colin Mackenzie, Twigg and Manners Smith, with a handful of the 20th Punjab Infantry, rushed to the right side of the fort and audaciously fired into the loopholes at a few yards range. On a bluff at the edge of the river cliff about one hundred and fifty yards from the fort Molony with the Gatling gun, some men of the 20th Punjab Infantry and a body of Kashmiri sepoys under Bradshaw, were directing showers of bullets on the loopholes opposite. The two seven-pounders under Gorton were also brought to the bluff and opened fire on the fort with shrapnel and shell. This was rather a warm corner, for the enemy directed their fire on this spot and within a few minutes we had several casualties. Our losses in the course of this assault would have been exceedingly heavy had it not been that the enemy's loopholes were so small that their fire was considerably hampered, and indeed from some of the loopholes a musket could only be directed on one spot.

Spedding came across to the bluff and brought the bad news that Colonel Durand had been severely wounded. Spedding had received the order to take his Pathans up to the height which the Punialis held. So we collected our men and clambered up the steep hillside as fast as we could go. From the ridge we looked down into the heart of the fort, the flat roofs and alleys being spread beneath us like a map. From here we fired into the fort, while fire was opened upon us from the numerous *sangas* on the opposite side of the Nilt *nullah*. While we were thus employed we heard a tremendous explosion sounding above the din of guns and musketry. As soon as the smoke had cleared we saw that our Gurkhas had forced their way into the fort, and that there was hand to hand fighting in the narrow alleys. The defenders

were rushing out of the back of the fort to escape beyond the *nullah*; so down we all clambered from our ridge to the *maidan* to fire at the fugitives. The loud cheers of our men told all the enemy in the *sangas* beyond that the Kanjut stronghold was ours.

I will now explain how Nilt was stormed. Other methods of attacking so strong a place having proved of no avail, Colonel Durand, just before he was wounded, gave the order that the fort should be taken by assault. How this was done will long be remembered as one of the most gallant things recorded in Indian warfare. Captain Aylmer, our engineer, was instructed to blow up the main gate of the fort so as to admit the storming party. First our guns and rifles opened a very heavy fire upon the loopholes of the fort that commanded the gate, under cover of which one hundred of the 5th Gurkhas led by Boisragon and Badcock made a rush at the outer wall, cut their way through the *abattis* with their *kukris*, and hacked an opening through the timber gate of the outer wall, through which the three officers, closely followed by half a dozen men, pushed their way.

While his companions fired into the loopholes, the officers using their revolvers, Aylmer, accompanied by his Pathan orderly, rushed to the foot of the main gate, which was strongly built and had been barricaded within with stones. Aylmer placed his slabs of guncotton at the foot of the gate, packed them with stones, and ignited the fuse, all the while being exposed to the fire from the towers that flanked the gate, and from some loopholes in the gate itself, as well as from rocks that were thrown at him from the battlements. He was shot in the leg from so short a distance that the flesh was burnt by the gunpowder, and received another wound that disabled his hand.

He and his orderly then followed the wall to a safe distance and awaited the explosion. None came, for the fuse was a faulty one. So Aylmer had once more to face an almost certain death. He returned to the gate, readjusted the fuse, cut it with his knife, lit a match and reignited the fuse. This time a terrific explosion followed, and at once, before the dust had cleared, the three British officers with the six men at their back,

clambered through the breach and were within Nilt fort, and for some minutes this handful of gallant men engaged in a hand to hand fight with the garrison in the narrow alley leading from the gate. Then the Gurkhas poured into the fort and fought as Gurkhas always do fight. The Kanjuts fought like fanatical Dervishes at first, but soon lost heart before the fierce attack. The fort was soon swarming with our men, who hunted the Kanjuts through the intricate alleys.

The Wazir of Nagar himself was killed, and about eighty men were left dead in the fort, but the bulk of the garrison, availing themselves of their knowledge of the maze which was their home, found their way out of the fort and escaped. Of the gallant handful of Gurkhas who had followed the three officers through the breach, two were killed, and nearly all were wounded. Lieutenant Badcock was severely wounded; Aylmer received three severe wounds. Aylmer and Boisragon were both decorated with the Victoria Cross, while Badcock who, in the opinion of his brother officers, had also earned that highest award of valour, received the Distinguished Service Order.

Aylmer's gallant deed produced a great impression in both camps, and the Puniali Rajah, who had witnessed the assault on the gate from the ridge, raised his hands and cried out, "This is the fighting of giants, not of men." We found an abundance of ammunition for Winchester, Berdan, Martini-Henry, Snider, and other rifles in the fort, but the Kanjuts had succeeded in carrying away all their rifles with them. For the rest of the day the enemy from their *sangas* on the other side of the Nilt *nullah* opened fire on us, and their *sher bachas* (roughly constructed cannon), projected their shot at us from seemingly inaccessible ledges high up the mountain side.

We were up at dawn on December 3. We understood that Spedding's Pathans were to make a road across the Nilt *nullah* under cover of the guns, and that the whole force was then to advance and attack the large fortress of Thol and the other defences on the *maidan* ahead. There is a small flat space of ground between the walls of Nilt fort and the edge of the cliff over the Nilt *nullah*.

I set out with others of Spedding's staff and the Pathans not long after daybreak, and we came upon the flat space at the same time that Gorton's two guns and a guard of the 5th Gurkhas appeared on the scene. No sooner were we all collected together, rather crowded up on this narrow space, than from rifles in the breastworks facing us, not more than eighty yards distant, a volley was poured into the thick of us and then the whole hill-side was covered with the ominous flashes as the Kanjut marksmen opened a steady, well-directed fire upon us. We were ordered to retire at once from this deadly corner.

In the very short space of time during which we were exposed to the enemy fire we had three men killed and several wounded, Lieutenant Gorton himself receiving a severe wound ; some of the battery mules were also hit. We then tried to make a road from what seemed to be a more sheltered point, but here again the enemy's heavy fire found us out, and there were more casualties. Captain Bradshaw, who, since Colonel Durand had been wounded, had taken over the command, now ordered the Pathans to abandon the road making.

It was now obvious that the Kanjuts were about to make a very determined stand here. It will be well to explain the nature of the extraordinary position which now confronted us, and before which, despite all our efforts, we were held in check for eighteen days, a check which was attended with serious danger, for the hostile tribes of the Indus valley, encouraged by our failure, were actually preparing to fall upon Boonji. Seeing how small was our available force, and how we were cut off from all possibility of reinforcement until the following summer, it is possible that a disaster would have occurred had the enemy been able to hold us in check much longer.

It may be said that smallpox saved us ; for the mobilization of the tribes of the Indus valley had been delayed by a fearful outbreak of that disease ; and, by the way, here is a problem for our anti-vaccinationists : Roberts, the surgeon at the Gilgit Agency, had introduced vaccination to all the tribes in the Gilgit valley, and though these people were constantly travelling through the affected districts in the Indus valley, not one of them

caught smallpox. There are now no anti-vaccinationists among the Gilgitis.

The Kanjut valley, between the bases of the mountains, is fifteen hundred yards wide. On the Nilt side of the river the precipitous tributary Nilt *nullah*, descending from the glaciers of Mount Rakapushi, twenty-five thousand five hundred and sixty feet in height, barred our advance. On the other side of the Kanjut river another tributary *nullah*, equally precipitous, also formed a seemingly insuperable obstacle. And right across the valley from the glaciers on one side to the glaciers on the other the further edges of these two *nullahs* were defended by *sangas* full of marksmen. On both sides of the river well cultivated flats extend along the foot of the mountains, and fall in precipitous cliffs some hundreds of feet in height to the river bed. These also were lined with breastworks for a considerable way up the river, and in one place a breastwork extended right across the beach.

Within two thousand yards of Nilt were the fortresses of Thol and Maiun standing on the cultivated flats. The tribesmen had broken away such roads as there were across these two *nullahs*, and had turned the water-courses over the edge of the cultivated land so that, as it was now freezing hard in the valley, smooth ramparts of solid ice descended to the river bed. Piled up rocks were also arranged on the cliff top so that by the displacement of a few stones an avalanche of boulders would fall on any men who should attempt their scaling. This wonderful position was held by quite four thousand men.

About forty of our men had now been killed or incapacitated by wounds; of our handful of British officers five were *hors de combat* and two had to be spared from the front to guard the line of communication. So the civilians in camp were placed upon the roster as officers and were attached to various regiments. The idea of taking the enemy's defences by assault this day was at last reluctantly abandoned. Several officers examined the cliffs of the *nullah* opposite from as close as it was possible to venture. I myself was sent to work my way under cover to inspect a path by which the

enemy had fled on the previous evening, and found that it had been broken away in the night. The sharp eyes of marksmen in the *sangas* soon detected me, and bullets whistled uncomfortably near my head.

For the eighteen days we remained here the Kanjuts and ourselves were always firing at each other from our respective sides of the river, and we must have harassed them a good deal by our unceasing attempts to break through their line of defence, now at one point, now at another. Spedding's Pathans, working by night, constructed a sandbag breastwork in the very bed of the Nilt *nullah*, and made a blockhouse on the top of the ridge from which we were able to open fire on the *sangas* opposite, which had been rendering themselves particularly objectionable to us. Officers explored the head of the *nullah* and reported that it could not be turned by troops as the glaciers were very steep and cloven by broad crevasses. A reconnaissance was made up the river, but the enemy's marksmen prevented this from being carried far. Our feints and night surprises failed one after the other, and that we never caught the enemy napping was no doubt due to the fact that there were spies in our camp. Another attempt at forcing the enemy's position at the lower end of the Nilt *nullah* was planned for December 8.

On the evening of December 7 I was sent with a strong body of 5th Gurkhas and men of the Ragu Pertab Kashmir regiment to relieve the picket at the ridge blockhouse and was instructed to silence any of the enemy *sangas* opposite me should they open fire on our storming party or road makers on the morrow. It was arranged that as soon as the road had been opened out and all was ready for the advance, Molony was to signal to me with a flag from the gun bastion, and that then I was to bring the 5th Gurkhas down to the fort and join the Ragu Pertab regiment (to which I was attached) which, under Townshend's command, was to attack the *sangas* on the *maidan* opposite, while the rest of the force was to assault Thol fort.

In the middle of the night, which was very black, as I was visiting rounds, a fearful din suddenly broke out below. Tomtoms were loudly beaten, men were shouting

in Thol, a heavy and unceasing fire was opened by the *sangas* of the enemy, while avalanche after avalanche of rocks thundered down the side of the *nullah* facing us, and fireballs of resinous wood plunged down the hillside, which fitfully lit up the bottom of the *nullah*. This was carried on throughout the night with little intermission. At dawn, in accordance with the instructions I had received, I set my men to open fire on the loopholes of the *sangas* opposite. Hour after hour passed by and still the signal I was looking for did not appear on the gun bastion. In the afternoon, Stewart came up with some sepoys to relieve me. It was clear that information of our preparations had been carried to the enemy who, under the impression that our attack was to be made by night, had anticipated us. So strongly had they reinforced these *sangas* that our attack was postponed.

On December 15, Spedding was told that it would be necessary to take his Pathans back to the Gilgit Road, as the grain question was now causing great anxiety, and it would be difficult, if not impossible, to feed his men any longer. Moreover, there was no more road making to be done at Nilt, whereas there was important work for the Pathans to finish on the road below. The work of Spedding's staff had been arduous, much of it having been done under fire, and their zeal and discipline were admirable. I was very sorry to part with my friends, but I obtained permission to stay on, and as our little mess had been broken up I was kindly invited to join the headquarters mess for the rest of the campaign.

CHAPTER XII

The storming of the ridge.—The covering party.—Flight of the enemy.—Another V.C.—Forced march to Nagar.—Occupation of Hunza.—The edge of the Pamirs.—The journey back to India.—Return to England.—Sir Evelyn Wood.—Henley and the *National Observer*.

THROUGH these anxious days of waiting there were never wanting officers and men to volunteer for the dangerous service of exploring the precipices by night to find a road. A plucky Dogra called Nagdu in the Kashmir Bodyguard Regiment, was engaged night after night in these reconnaissances. At last he discovered a difficult way up the high cliff that faced our ridge blockhouse. One night, alone, he scaled the cliff and demonstrated the practicability of the ascent so far as he was concerned. But it would be impossible to take a body of troops up these precipices in the dark, so it was proposed to storm this position in broad daylight under cover of a heavy fire from the ridge. At this time Captain Bradshaw happened to be in Gilgit, having been compelled to go there to consult with Colonel Durand on the troublesome subject of supplies and other matters; so the command devolved on Colin Mackenzie, who carried the above plan into execution. Complete secrecy was observed, and the spies in our camp had no suspicion of what was about to happen.

On the night of December 19, Lieutenant Manners Smith and Lieutenant Taylor with one hundred men of the Kashmir Bodyguard Regiment, all hill men, set out for the bottom of the Nilt *nullah*, ascended its bed until they came to the foot of the cliff at the point where it was intended to scale it, and there remained hidden until daylight. I was informed that I was put in command of the detachment of the 20th Punjab Infantry and that with these—the best marksmen in our force—I was to silence one of the four *sangas* that were to be assaulted. I was instructed to take a Martini-Henry with me, as anyone who could shoot straight would be of use on this occasion.

The moon rose at ten that night, so it was necessary that the storming party should reach their hiding place

in the *nullah* before that hour. At seven the little force was paraded and noiselessly marched off under cover of the darkness. It may be imagined how anxiously we others, sitting in the mess tent, listened for every sound, knowing that if the enemy should detect the presence of our men in the *nullah* a fearful havoc would be wrought by the deadly rock avalanches. Suddenly there arose a loud noise of cheering and beating of tomtoms, but as there were no sounds of firing or falling rocks, we knew that the men in Maiun were off their guard, and engaging in one of their periodic orgies. Two hours and more passed; there were no noises from the *nullah*. All was well.

Before daybreak on the 20th, the covering party of one hundred and thirty-five rifles under Colin Mackenzie ascended the ridge. They were divided into four parties under Boisragon, Townshend, Baird and myself, each to open a steady, independent fire on one of the four *sangas* that threatened the storming party. When the freezing mist cleared away and we could see the *sangas*, we concentrated our fire upon these four defences, paying no attention to the other *sangas* which opened fire upon us. Our fire was so accurate that the return fire from the four *sangas* soon slackened and then ceased altogether.

From all the walls and parapets of the towered fortresses below the enemy in their thousands watched the action that was being fought on the skyline high above them, awaiting the result. Manners Smith had been instructed not to commence his ascent until we had carried on this fire for half an hour. Then he and his fifty Gurkhas, followed by Taylor and fifty Dogras, began to clamber up the precipice. From our ridge we could see the little stream of men gradually winding up, now turning to the right, now to the left, as some insurmountable obstacle presented itself. At last Manners Smith attained a point about eight hundred feet above the *nullah* bed, and here he met with a check. The precipice above him was absolutely inaccessible. It was necessary for him and his men to retrace their steps down to the *nullah*.

Two hours had already passed and Manners Smith, not discouraged, flag-signalled to Colin Mackenzie that he would make another attempt somewhat lower down

the *nullah*. As we fired over his head at the *sangas* we saw him clamber higher and higher from this fresh point, and at last, with a handful of the more active sepoys, he was within sixty yards of the *sangas*. It was happily not until this moment that the enemy had any idea that a party of sepoys was scaling the heights. The Maiun people first detected our men and shouted a warning across the river, which was carried up the mountain side from *sanga* to *sanga* until the men holding the four *sangas* realized that their position was being stormed. Rocks were now thrown over the *sanga* walls and showers of stones poured down the cliff. Fortunately by this time most of the gallant little party had passed the points most exposed to these avalanches, and the rocks either swept down to the left of our men or bounded harmlessly over their heads. Several men, however, were wounded, and Taylor was knocked down by a rock, but was not seriously injured.

We poured in a fiercer fire than ever at the loopholes of the *sangas*, but we could not prevent the defenders from throwing rocks from the inside of the breastworks which, dislodging others, produced dangerous cataracts of stones. Still our men slowly gained the summit, foot by foot. Some of the enemy exhibited great bravery, boldly rushing out into the open to roll down the ready piled-up rocks as fast as they were able until they were shot down by our marksmen on the ridge.

At last we saw Manners Smith make a sudden dash forward, reach the foot of the first *sanga*, and clamber round to the right of it. A few sepoys were close at his heels, and having got to the back of the *sanga* for the first time brought their rifles into play. There were a few shots in rapid succession, a rush through the opening behind with bayonets and *kukris*, Manners Smith himself pistolling the first man, and the *sanga* was ours. Those of the garrison who were not killed within were shot as they fled down the hillside. All the sepoys of the storming party now having come up, they divided into parties, attacked and carried the other *sangas* on the hillside, captured the *sher bachas* higher up, and rolled them down the precipices. A determined resistance was offered by some of the enemy, who fought to the death

and asked no quarter. But the bulk of them lost heart and began to bolt precipitately from their defences, and at least a hundred of them were shot down as they were escaping.

And now the tomtoms that had been beating in the distance became silent, and suddenly we saw a strange sight beneath us. The garrisons of the enemy fortresses, realizing that we had effectually turned their position and that their retreat would speedily be cut off did they remain where they were, were seized with panic, and we looked down on long streams of men hurrying up the valley on both sides of the river, the defenders of Maiun, Thol and the *sangas*, thousands of Kanjuts, running for their lives, and abandoning to us all the country within sight.

In recognition of the gallantry he displayed while leading this attack, the Queen conferred the Victoria Cross on Manners Smith. Thus, though this was but one of our little wars, no less than three of our officers won that coveted decoration. But this was a war of forlorn hopes. In an expedition such as this, when a handful of men is sent into a remote and difficult region to drive a well-armed foe, greatly superior in numbers, out of almost impregnable positions, it is only by such feats of individual heroism that victory is attained with so little loss of life.

Having got the Kanjuts on the run, Colin Mackenzie was not going to give them the opportunity of organizing another defence higher up the valley, and so soon as our sappers and miners had opened up a rough path across the foot of the Nilt *nullah*, the main body of our force pushed on to Pisan, seven miles off, a strong position at which the enemy might make another stand, rested there a few hours, and at daybreak on December 21, made a forced march to Nagar twenty miles farther on, across a most difficult country, following rugged tracks that wound high up the precipitous mountain side, crossing wearisome slopes of boulders, broad glaciers and frozen streams. The baggage, supplies and guns were left behind, while the country had to be relied on to supply food to the troops.

I was ordered to escort our one hundred and eighteen prisoners back to Chalt, guarded by the men of the 20th Punjab Infantry, and then to overtake the main body

without delay. So off I went with my captives, reached Chalt in the middle of the night, delivered the prisoners, and at three the next morning was off again in pursuit of the column. This meant for me a forced march of forty-five miles. I walked through the Nagar State alone and noticed that towards the fortified villages, which occurred at frequent intervals, crowds of men and women were driving the cattle back from the mountains to which they had been taken for safety. They told me that though Hunza might still be holding out there was peace in Nagar, the *Thum* of that State having submitted to us. All the tribesmen whom I met were most friendly and gave me food—cakes and apples. I overtook the column in Nagar, the capital of the State, where it was encamped.

On the following day we occupied the picturesque fortress of Hunza, the exploration of which proved very interesting, for we found there the loot of many raided caravans, and among the rifles many Russian Berdans and abundant ammunition. We heard that the *Thum* of Hunza had fled to China by way of the Killik Pass, with four hundred men, taking with him the more valuable treasures from Hunza Castle, and many rifles. So it was decided that one hundred of the Kashmir Bodyguard Regiment under Baird and Molony, with Manners Smith as political officer, should pursue the fugitives to the foot of the Killik Pass.

I obtained permission to accompany this force. We started on Christmas Day, and the six marches up the valley were certainly very rough. As we ascended, cultivation ceased and after our third day's march there was no vegetation. It was all a chaos of rocks and ice and snow. We had to pass along the face of the precipices by narrow scaffoldings thrown from ledge to ledge, to traverse broad glaciers, and to scramble from crevice to crevice high up the walls of rock ; in one day's march we had to ford the icy torrent twelve times. And all the time it was freezing very hard and our breath hung in masses of ice from our moustaches. Many of the sepoys got footsore and had to be left behind in the villages which we passed.

Only twenty-five of the men accompanied us on the last of the six marches which brought us to the little

fort of Misgar. Hard by was the summit of the Killik Pass, fifteen thousand feet above the sea. We had failed to overtake the flying *Thum*, who had had too long a start of us, and we could go no farther, for our orders, of course, prevented us from crossing the pass into Chinese territory, so we returned to Hunza by the way we had come. Having left small garrisons at Hunza and some of the other forts, the troops made a triumphal entry into Gilgit on January 22.

I now decided to return to England. Fortunately Dr. Robertson, the explorer of Kafiristan, who had been our political officer through the campaign, was also travelling to India, and I was enabled to accompany him. We ascended the Indus valley for several marches beyond Scardo, for a great portion of the way along a terrible track. The Indus here rushes through stupendous defiles. The ever recurring ascents and descents, sometimes of several thousands of feet, are very trying. In places one scales the cliffs by rough ladders or by trunks of trees standing up on ledge to higher ledge, or with the assistance of pegs stuck here and there in crevices of the rock. Then came the passage of the Himalayas by the Zoji La Pass. For six days we marched through snow in the most intense cold I have ever known and were nearing the farther side of the plateau on the summit of the pass, from which there is a sudden drop of two thousand feet to the Sind valley, when a fierce wind suddenly sprang up, whirling clouds of frozen snow like spray into the air. It was well that it had not overtaken us before, for men could not long have contended with this icy blast, and we had been dragging ourselves through deep soft snow for ten hours.

An extraordinary stampede now took place. The coolies, knowing their danger, literally threw themselves down the almost precipitous snow slopes of the *nullah*, tumbling over each other, leaping, sliding and rolling, hurrying to the shelter far below as quickly as they could, almost regardless in their panic of the crevasses that opened out into the torrent rushing under the piled up snow. One man did fall through but was hauled out at once, and we were soon all sitting safely in the rest huts of Baltal, caring no longer for the wind that howled

outside. All our difficulties were over, and it was easy going from Baltal to London. I was content with my year's work. I had seen wonderful countries; I had got the materials for a good book; I had worked as an officer through the little war, and was proud to get my medal and to be mentioned twice in despatches.

I got home in the early spring and set to work to write my book, "Where Three Empires Meet." After its publication I had the opportunity of learning the opinion held by the High Command of our Hunza Nagar Expedition. It was at a dinner party given by Mr. Buckle, the editor of *The Times*, at the Athenæum Club. Among the guests were General Sir Evelyn Wood, Mr. Joseph Chamberlain, Mr. Balfour, Mr. John Morley and other famous people. General Sir Evelyn Wood was sitting next to me. Mr. Buckle introduced us to each other, mentioning the fact that I had just brought out a book on Kashmir.

Sir Evelyn Wood being rather deaf, did not catch my name and said to me, "By the way have you read Knight's 'Where Three Empires Meet?'" and proceeded to make some very flattering remarks about the book.

Mr. Buckle then put in, "You are speaking to the author of it."

Sir Evelyn Wood laughed and said, "Well that was an unconscious compliment anyhow," and proceeded to explain that the expedition was the wildest and most desperate adventure, and ought not to have been undertaken.

"You all deserve to have been scuppered. But," he added after a pause, "it is a good thing for this country that we have young officers who will take unjustifiable risks, and after all the expedition proved a great success and has done a great deal of good on that frontier."

It was about this time that I became connected with the *National Observer*, that periodical that was of too fine quality to be financially successful. The little office in College Street, Westminster, where Henley genially ruled over his staff of young wits may be described as one of the pleasantest clubs in London. Henley used to correct all the copy, putting into it his own brilliant style until one hardly recognized it, but the improvement was amazing, at any rate in my case.

CHAPTER XIII

Trouble with Lobengula.—I go to South Africa.—The first Matabele war.—With the Bechuanaland Border Police.—Bulawayo as it was.—An Indaba.—Witch doctors.—The story of Wilson's patrol.—Dr. Jameson.—The first gymkhana meeting.—Queer characters.

BUT my work for the *National Observer* was soon interrupted, for Lobengula was causing trouble in Mashonaland, and *The Times* sent me to South Africa. So I went to Capetown and took the train northwards to Vryburg, which was at that time the terminus of the railway, and thence had a six hundred miles trek to what is now Bulawayo in an oxen wagon with some very friendly Boer transport riders. It was in the rainy season and the journey was a long one, for we were often delayed by waiting for flooded rivers to subside, or by the difficulties of dragging our wagon through the swamps. But it was a pleasant journey across the wild veldt, and as we went along we found plenty of game and the pot was well provided for. We heard that the Chartered Company's forces had invaded Matabeleland, had fought two victorious actions with the Matabele *impis*, and that Lobengula's kraal at Bulawayo had been captured and burnt; but all our informants were of opinion that the fighting was by no means over yet, and that it would be resumed after the rains.

We met several transport wagons slowly toiling northward along the long, muddy track, accompanied by adventurers bound for the new land—shrewd old colonists and African traders, men fresh from Europe, and scamps in plenty, all fired by visions of the Eldorado, some to prospect for gold, others old freebooters of the frontier, full of plans to capture Lobengula's cattle, others of Micawber-like temperament, not knowing what they would do, penniless but yet quite confident that some good thing would turn up for them.

When I got to Bulawayo I found that the king's kraal was but a heap of black ashes set in the midst of the green verdure of the veldt. About a mile from it was the straggling camp of tents, native huts, and ragged

shanties, in which the white adventurers were collected. A little mud fort stood in one corner of the camp. There was but one real building in the place, the brick farm-house and store of Jimmy Dawson, the adventurous pioneer of civilization, who had long established himself in Lobengula's capital, and was the trusted friend of that capricious monarch. Like Selous in the Boer war he honourably abstained from taking any part in the campaign against his old friends, but was of the greatest service to both British and Matabele at the close of hostilities.

Dr. Jameson was in Bulawayo when I arrived, busily employed in settling the affairs of the newly conquered country. He told me that Colonel Gould Adams with two hundred men of the Bechuana Border Police was to set out for the scene of the disaster to Major Wilson's Patrol on the Shangani River, and to find and bury the bones of the Englishmen. He was also to follow up the Matabele *impis*, who were still holding out in that part of the country, and if possible bring Lobengula in. I rode to the Inyati Mission Station and found this splendid body of mounted men there encamped. One half of them were colonials, Dutch and British frontier men experienced in veldt life, the other half men of British birth, men who had served in British cavalry regiments, sailors, and stalwart youngsters from our public schools and universities. Unfortunately the patrol did not go far, for heavy rains fell, the rivers became impassable, and the roads were in so bad a condition that it would be impossible to take wagons with the force.

So the expedition was postponed until the conditions improved, and we marched back to the headquarters of the B.B.P. at Inyati. But one result of the patrol was the capture of Lobengula's great witch-doctor, Mwagbene. This ruffian, who was hated, but dreaded, by all the Matabele, had but to raise his finger to cause any innocent man or woman to be cruelly put to death. A few days before we caught him, this witch-doctor had first gouged out a woman's eyes with an assagai and then thrown her into a pool of the river to be devoured by crocodiles.

Colonel Gould Adams, after a full enquiry, had this brute shot to the delight, but also to the great wonder,

of the assembled natives, who, until then had considered Mwagbene to be an immortal. One native explained to me through an interpreter that the late witch-doctor was a very terrible person, for he used to smell to the north far beyond the Zambesi and in all other directions, and whatever man he smelt out had his brains knocked out by the king's orders. Mwagbene, my informant assured me, was once killed on the Zambesi, but so great a witch-doctor was he that he came to life again, " and it was a proof of his great power that it took so many of your bullets to kill him—if you have killed him."

Availing myself of a spell of fine weather, I rode with a friend to the Mavin district, which is about one hundred miles to the north-east of Bulawayo, to do a little prospecting on my own account. It was a region supposed to contain some of the richest reefs in Matabeleland, but so far, very few prospectors had ventured to that portion of the country to peg out claims, for it was held to be still far from secure, as parties of Lobengula's followers were roaming through it to carry off cattle and grain. We found the people in many of the kraals in a miserable condition, impoverished and half starved in consequence of these raids, and smallpox was devastating the whole country. Of gold there were traces everywhere, especially where we came across those ancient workings which are still a mystery.

At the bottom of one of these ancient shafts, by the way, when the debris was cleared out of it, was found a Roman copper coin of the reign of Antonius Pius. Dr. Jameson had asked me before I started on this journey to make a route map of the short cut I had made to Mavin, with grades, etc. This I did, and later on Dr. Jameson told me that my map proved to be very accurate when compared with the proper survey that was made later. All the implements I had with me were a watch and a note book. How to map out a route as you ride, having only a watch with one and no compass, as quickly as possible, might serve as a problem to a class for small boys.

We rode back to Inyati and were there on March 8 when Jimmy Dawson and Riley returned from their mission to the Shangani, bearing the satisfactory information

that meant the cessation of hostilities. I heard the story from Dawson's own lips. As old friends of Lobengula these two had volunteered to find him out and open negotiations with him, and also to bring back with them the bones of Wilson's patrol. On reaching the Shangani they found on the left bank of the river a great number of people in miserable plight, victims of malaria, smallpox and starvation. On the opposite bank of the Shangani were the *indunas* and *impis* that had done most of the fighting during the war. These were hostilely disposed and probably would have fallen on the envoys and killed them had not the river between them been full and impassable.

In the meanwhile Dawson and Riley remained on the left bank and showed by their actions that they had not come with any hostile intent. Gradually confidence was established, and by shouting across the river a conversation was carried on with the *indunas* opposite, and the peaceable object of the mission was explained. The Matabele had taken it for granted that the white man would kill them for having fought under Lobengula. But Dawson promised that they would be honourably treated if they came in. Then having confidence in our envoy's good faith, all the fighting men agreed to come in; for being worn with fever and famine they longed to leave that plague-ridden spot and return to the cultivation of their fields. The pacification of Matabeleland was therefore assured, and for this great credit was due to Dawson and Riley. None other than these two old friends of Lobengula could so successfully and rapidly have brought the affair to this satisfactory conclusion.

A few days later, the river having gone down, Dawson and Riley crossed the Shangani, found the bones of Wilson's party and buried them under a *mopani* tree on which they cut the simple inscription, "To brave men." They ascertained that Lobengula had died of fever forty miles from the Zambesi. It was left to Umjan, the faithful *induna*, to bury the king, which he did with all the ceremonies fitted for the royal obsequies. He carried the body to the mouth of a cavern, placed it in a sitting position so that the face was turned towards the rising

sun, arrayed it in the robes of state, laid the king's assagais and other weapons by his side, and then built around all a sepulchre of stones. Two of Lobengula's wives hung themselves when they heard that the king was dead.

Having promised to come back shortly with wagon loads of food and medicine for those who were too weak to travel, Dawson and Riley went back to Inyati, taking with them some *indunas* that these might " hear the word of Dr. Jameson " and go back to their people to explain his will. A few days later Dawson and Riley returned to the Shangani with the promised grain and other supplies, disinterred the bones of Major Wilson's party, and brought them back to await the erection of Mr. Rhodes' monument to the memory of those gallant men, amid the ruins of Zimbabwe.

I returned to Bulawayo and was invited by Dr. Jameson to join the headquarters mess, a native hut in which he, Colonel Frank Rhodes and a few other Empire makers used to work hard by day and to sit in the evening after dinner and discuss all manner of things over their pipes under an old hurricane lamp overhead. I remember one evening that we all put out suggestions as to what should be the name of the new colony. One of us remarked that Rhodesia would be a fitting title and the idea commended itself to all. So far as I know this was the first occasion on which the term Rhodesia was employed.

Dr. Jameson, as Administrator, had despotic powers at that time and he exercised them admirably. He planned the settlement of Matabeleland as well as carried it out. For he was left for several months with an entirely free hand, and was not hampered by ignorant interference from home. Within a few weeks after the close of the war he had reconciled the tribesmen to his rule and had established order throughout all that vast region, so that it became possible for a single unarmed white man to travel in safety in any part of it. He made himself loved by the savage Matabele as well as by his own countrymen. He acquired an extraordinary influence over the *indunas* who still ruled their districts under his supervision.

I was present at most of the *indabas* or official interviews when the chiefs came in to lay down their arms

and to learn their fate. These were interesting functions. The chiefs always arrived looking dispirited and anxious ; they always departed in a most cheerful frame of mind. Patiently, with kindly words adapted to their savage intelligence, Jameson would clearly explain to them what their position would be under our rule. He assured them of their own safety and that protection would be afforded to their wives and property. He told them that the white man bore no grudge against those who had fought bravely against us, but on the contrary respected those men most. When old Umjan, the chief who had led the *impi* that had cut off Wilson's party, came in, I heard the doctor say to him :

" And you, Umjan, are the *induna* whom I respect most, for you are the most stubborn fighter of them all, and you stood faithfully by your king until the very end."

Thus he won their simple hearts.

" The *umkosi umkhulu* (great chief) " cried the *induna* " is the friend of the Matabele and therefore we can now sleep."

Umjan gave us a graphic account of the cutting up of Wilson's patrol of thirty-eight men by the surrounding *impi*. He described the manner in which the handful of Britons stood at bay shooting with deadly effect, cheering occasionally, jeering at the Matabele, challenging them to come nearer, while the latter, perpetually raising their war cry of " *Schzee ! Schzee !* " fired out of the bush.

" The white men," he said, " fought standing up together, but when a man was wounded he lay down and continued to fire or if he was unable to fight handed up his ammunition to his comrades. All the white men were killed at last, except one big man who would not die. He stood on the top of an ant hill. He had collected round him the revolvers and ammunition of his comrades and killed numbers of his foemen, and at last he too was killed."

Said Umjan, " We were fighting then with men of men, and their fathers must have been men before them."

The Matabele, after hearing from Dr. Jameson's words that the rule of the Chartered Company would sit lightly on them, realized that the breaking up of the

Matabele military despotism would really come as a blessing to them, for they were shrewd enough to see that henceforth the cattle they bred and the crops they raised would be their own, whereas till then nearly all belonged to the king. Content too with the new state of things were the Matabele who used to travel south to work in the mines within our territory, for hitherto they could not return to their homes unless they brought to the king valuable presents or a considerable portion of the wages which they had received from the white men.

Jameson, with his cheery, frank manner, won the hearts of the Matabele *indunas* as he won all others. He carefully dealt with every question they put to him and with every grievance. His manner with them was rather that of a genial schoolmaster discussing problems with favourite pupils than that of a conqueror dealing with a beaten foe. At the same time he was stern and firm when the occasion demanded it.

At this *indaba*, Dr. Jameson made it clear to the *indunas* that they would be permitted to rule their people as before unless they acted with cruelty or injustice to those placed under them, save that they would not be entrusted with the power of life and death, the prerogative of the white *indunas*, and witchcraft would be rigorously suppressed. Witchcraft used to exert a great influence, always for evil, over the minds of these superstitious people. Witchcraft, as practised here, was invariably the prelude of murder. Dr. Jameson reminded the *indunas* that Colonel Gould Adams had already shot one witch-doctor, and he warned them that he would promptly hang any witch-doctor who renewed his evil practices. All the Matabele have implicit faith in the terrible power of their wizards, and so soon as the administrator broached this to them tabooed topic, the cheerful expression on the faces of the *indunas* faded and was replaced by anxious looks ; for was it not a dreadful thing to talk so lightly of killing witch-doctors ?

There was one exception, however. Umlogulu, the late king's great dance doctor, was, by virtue of his office, himself a witch-doctor, a harmless one, however, and it was said, so far, innocent of bloodshed. He alone

evinced no sign of alarm while the doctor threatened his order. Umlogulu was a jovial old fellow with an intelligent merry face, and eyes ever twinkling with fun and mischief.

" But you are a witch-doctor yourself ; are you going to have them all slain ? " he now asked the administrator with a smile ; for the natives make no distinction between doctors of medicine and those of magic.

Then spoke another *induna* gravely : " The witch-doctors will avenge themselves. We are all likely to be poisoned by them now if we help you in this ; they have but to place a shred of crocodile skin in our food or even lay it on the ground so that we step over it and we shall die."

" That is nonsense," said Dr. Jameson, " I could eat all the shreds of crocodile skin the witch-doctors like to produce and I should not die."

" You would not die," put in Umlogulu, " because you are a doctor like myself, but all these others would."

Then another *induna*, hoping no doubt thereby to conciliate the wizards, made a half-hearted attempt to defend the practice of witchcraft. He explained that when the witch-doctors *loya* or smell out a person that person is not immediately killed, but undergoes a fair trial.

" That is not so," Jameson replied. " There is never any fairness in it, the result of the trial is a foregone conclusion. I know well that when a man is smelt out it is because he is richer or more powerful than the others, and that he is certain to be found guilty by his judges greedy to divide his property. You, Gambo, were very nearly smelt out once ; if any body smells you out now I will hang him. Take warning Umlogulu, that I will hang you if you ever *loya* a man."

It was very interesting to watch the development of that little mining camp that was in the near future to become the handsome stone built city of Bulawayo. Our population soon numbered three hundred, and then there sprang up that first sign of civilization, a weekly newspaper, all of which was written out by hand by the editor and then printed off by him with a copying machine. In wagons and on horseback the white men

were pouring into the towns while the poor tramped the whole distance from the colony. Of these last, several perished on the road of fever and privations. Shortly before I left Bulawayo a young Scotchman who had come all the way from Glasgow to seek his fortune here, was found one morning lying dead under a tree outside the camp; he had succumbed when within a mile of the Eldorado towards which he had been struggling. The Chartered Company found it necessary to issue free rations to numbers of penniless people who were entering Matabeleland. They also had to get rid of a good many undesirable people. For instance, the disbanded troopers of a certain command recruited in Johannesburg who had fought well through the war but were now robbing friend and foe, and freebooters from the Transvaal who were busy lifting Matabele cattle and driving them across the frontier, were turned out of the country. The Johannesburg toughs even stole millstones, and when these men had gone we were no longer compelled to sit on our blankets to preserve them from the pilferers. There was a curious collection of hard cases in the camp, lawless men who had come up to see what they could make out of the country legitimately or otherwise. But the large bulk of the men in the camp were the pick of Anglo-Saxon manhood, stalwart, bronzed, keen of eye, honest traders, and hunters of the frontier.

The late Mr. Labouchere hated the Chartered Company and dubbed the then white dwellers in Matabeleland a lot of "border ruffians." There were of course several border ruffians in our little community, as there always are at first on a new gold field. But it was a fair British crowd to deal with. Revolvers and knives were not countenanced in settling disputes, and men used to fight with their fists in the good old English fashion. The Chartered Company kept order well, soon organized its splendid force of mounted police, and expelled the more troublesome.

There were, of course, a good many enterprising Johannesburg Jews among us, making money fast in various ways. And, indeed, any one who was in Bulawayo at that time with a little money in his pocket could have made a fortune, if only by buying up their prospective

rights from the disbanded troopers. Every man who had taken part in the expedition was entitled to a bonus mining right of twenty claims, to a farming right of six thousand acres and to a loot claim—the latter an unfortunate term for it gave Mr. Labouchere the pretext for railing at the Chartered Company in *Truth*. A loot claim entitled the owner to a share in the sum realized from the sale of Lobengula's confiscated cattle. A loot claim was ultimately found to be worth thirty pounds, but they were often sold for three pounds each. The average price realized for a farming right giving the owner the right to peg out a farm of six thousand acres was seventy pounds, but many were sold for much less. The right to peg out twenty mining claims was sold for eight pounds or less. I was present at the first sale by auction of stands in the coming township. The upset price of a stand was thirty pounds. The average price realized was fifty pounds, while the best stands on the market square found purchasers at one hundred and forty pounds to one hundred and sixty pounds. What are they worth now! On April 25, the Matabele goldfields were proclaimed open to the world and then anyone who paid the necessary fees, the cost of which was under a pound, could peg out ten claims.

On the first Easter Monday after the occupation of Bulawayo, we had a gymkhana meeting there. There were nearly five hundred men present, all the prospectors and other white men in the country having come in, but not a woman among us, for we were then still in the rough bachelor pioneer stage of a new colony, coatless, collarless, in flannel shirts. There was not yet a boiled shirt or a laundress within five hundred miles.

" General " Digby Willoughby, the genial gentleman adventurer — a *condottiere* one might call him—who, among other exploits, in the last French Hova war had commanded the Malagasy in their successful defence against the French, had come up to Bulawayo to buy mining rights. He and I made a silver book between us and started as the first bookmakers that had ever been seen in Bulawayo. I remember Jameson as he came up to make a bet with me chaffingly asked me what I thought the editor of *The Times* would say if he saw

The Times special correspondent playing the part of bookmaker at a meeting of " border ruffians." We did fairly well, for at the end of the day we calculated that we had won a substantial sum. But it was a point of etiquette that the bookmakers should stand a drink to everyone, winner or loser, who had a bet with him. As a tot of whisky cost half a crown or more we found on reckoning up that our bank was just about where it had been in the morning. We had neither made nor lost anything. But on the other hand we did rather well backing a dark horse that Willoughby rode in one of the races.

An incident occurred at this gymkhana which illustrates the manners of the then Bulawayo. I was pensively watching two Jew boys who, with a little table in front of them, were enticing revellers to play at the card game known as " under or over seven," when suddenly I heard the rattle of a Maxim gun in action. I thought at first that this was merely the accompaniment of the Victoria Cross race that was then being run. But the Jew boys promptly dived under their table for shelter and I heard the unmistakable whistle of bullets above my head. Was it a surprise attack by the Matabele? Then suddenly the firing ceased.

It seemed that a trooper who was imprisoned for some offence in the little mud fort had managed to get drunk and to elude his guard. He had quietly pressed the button of the Maxim on the fort and opened fire on the crowd. Promptly someone had jumped on the fort, knocked the man down, and so released the button. No damage was done. The man in his drunken humour had merely fired over the heads of the crowd. Some of the leading men in the country were right in the line of fire.

" Would not "Labby" have had a delightful article if the border ruffian had wiped out Frank Rhodes and myself," remarked Jameson to me with one of his cheery laughs. Prisons in South Africa were often mere mud huts in those days, and gaol breaking was easy. I suppose that the story is still told in the Transvaal of the man who escaped from gaol and who, when tried for that offence, denied that he had escaped. This was his defence.

" I was leaning against my cell wall when it broke and I fell out in the street. There was a duststorm on, so I was lost and could not find my way back."

Quaint were some of the characters whom I met in the slovenly camp that has now become the city of Bulawayo. The cockney Jews who came from Johannesburg, ruffians though many of them were, possessed the saving grace of humour. There was one of whom many amusing stories were told. He was a notorious I.G.B. but how he procured the stolen gold and how he smuggled it out of the country had long been an unsolved problem to the police, who, encouraged by a heavy reward, dogged his every movement. At last he thought that he would retire from this dangerous trade and settle down as a farmer, but he decided to make one great final coup. A detective got wind of a Cape cart that was to be driven across the frontier into Bechuanaland on a certain night. So the police intercepted the Cape cart and found to their delight that it was loaded with ingots of gold which belonged to the suspected Jew. It was indeed a valuable haul. The man was duly tried for this serious offence in a Transvaal court. He conducted his own defence and displayed a great coolness when examined. He frankly allowed that he had sent the cart ; on being shown the ingots he said that they were certainly his. His conviction seemed a matter of course when he calmly put a few questions to the court.

" I am accused of sending gold out of the country ; how do you know that these ingots are of gold ? Have you assayed them ? "

The reply was in the negative.

" Then I demand that they should be assayed."

And thereupon he explained that the ingots were not of gold but of base metal thinly coated with gold, and that he was sending them to some Colonial exhibition in England so that they might serve to demonstrate to the public what the annual output of gold from the Transvaal amounted to. It was as he said, and he was acquitted. It was more than suspected that while he was drawing off the attention of the police by this ruse he was smuggling the real ingots out of the country by some other route.

But there were some far more sinister rascals than our genial I.G.B. in Bulawayo at that time, of whom " Captain " X is a good example. This very plausible gentleman arrived there as soon as the war was over, and, provided with good references, introduced himself to Dr. Jameson and the other members of the head-quarters mess. He gave out that he was a distinguished journalist and had come to Matabeleland to investigate the prospects of the country and of the Chartered Company. At that time there was a great deal of hostile criticism of the Company's methods in the English Press, and it was doubtful whether the British Government would support the Company in its policy. Aware of this, " Captain " X hoped that the Chartered Company would bribe him to write nicely about them. His hints failing to produce any effect, he next tried to bribe Dr. Jameson's faithful servant to let him look over some of the doctor's correspondence. Then as his past became known he had to leave the country, but made some profit out of his visit by writing scurrilous articles about the state of things in Matabeleland, with which he poisoned the columns of credulous papers at home.

This brazen-faced man could not have looked forward to a long innings at Bulawayo, for his record was certain to become known in time, and a pretty bad record it was. Found guilty of embezzling the municipal funds of a town of which he was a trusted high official, he had done time on the breakwater at Capetown. An amusing story is told of his removal to the railway in a Cape cart guarded by two warders. While passing a wayside inn he asked his captors to stop awhile.

" I know this place. They do things well here. I will give you an excellent dinner if you will lend me an over-coat to hide my prison dress and come with me."

They yielded; they had a very good dinner with champagne and liqueurs; then he filled their pockets with cigars and asked for the bill. He looked it over.

" Very cheap, landlord, considering how well you have done us. . . . . Well, send the bill into Queen Victoria, Buckingham Palace, for I happen to be her guest for the time being."

" General Willoughby " had met him before in Kimberley and told me a good story illustrative of the man's effrontery. " Captain " X had boasted that he had been a captain of Swedish artillery and spoke Swedish well. Willoughby doubted him and knowing that an old Swede kept a drinking bar in the town, without saying anything led " Captain " X there. Then Willoughby said to the Swede :

" I have brought you a friend of mine who speaks Swedish well. He was a captain in your artillery."

The delighted Swede poured forth a torrent of welcomings in Swedish. The " Captain " listened but did not turn a hair. When the Swede paused, " Captain " X turned to Willoughby and remarked quietly :

" Funny how a man, if he stays long enough in a foreign country, forgets his own language. I can hardly understand a word he says."

Picture to yourselves the fury of the old Swede.

I am happy to say that Willoughby and myself, finding that a young Belgian who had trekked up with me was about to entrust all his very small capital to " Captain " X for investment in some imaginary land company, intervened and saved the boy. Curiously enough, I have heard tidings of " Captain " X in other parts of the world, where he had been making mischief. He had made both America and Asia too hot for him, so possibly, if he is not dead, he will, as a last resort, come over to cheat us in England, that home of dupes.

CHAPTER XIV

Across the high veldt.—Zimbabwe.—A talk with the king of the Manicas.—Walk to Beira.—Adventurous Japanese.—Cecil Rhodes.—Home.—My projected book.

DR. JAMESON'S presence was demanded in Mashonaland, so matters having been settled in Matabeleland, he, Colonel Frank Rhodes, Sir John Willoughby and myself set out from Bulawayo to ride to Salisbury, a delightful journey of about three hundred miles over the highest portion of the high veldt. We followed the route by which the Salisbury column had marched on Bulawayo, along the watershed between the tributaries of the Zambesi and those of the Crocodile and Sabi. Probably no white man had traversed this magnificent region until the Salisbury column had opened it out. The country seemed to be entirely uninhabited save by wild beasts, of which there were plenty, including lions. We lit big fires at night to keep the latter off our animals, but one night the lions seized and carried off one of the horses tethered close to the fire. We rode across the battlefields which had been the scene of the routing of Lobengula's *impis*, and on the Bembezi heights and on the Shangani we saw the skulls and bones of the Matabele still lying on the veldt among the long grass.

When we reached Salisbury we found Pioneer Street hung with flags, and the entire population turned out to receive the popular administrator with hearty cheers as he rode by. Here we bade farewell to Dr. Jameson; and Colonel Rhodes and myself, being bound for England, after a tour through the mining districts and a visit to the mysterious ruins of Zimbabwe, arrived at Umtali, where we halted for a few days before starting for Beira.

A few miles outside Umtali, Umtassa, "King of the Manicas," dwelt in the mountain stronghold which was his capital, with some five hundred warriors armed with Martinis, repeating rifles and flintlocks. He considered his position impregnable and treated the officers of the

Chartered Company, who had attempted to enter into negotiations with him, with persistent insolence, and conflicts in which lives were lost had occurred between his followers and the Company's constabulary. His stronghold was becoming a city of refuge for native criminals, and not only did he refuse to pay the hut tax which the Company had imposed throughout its territory, but persuaded other chieftains in his neighbourhood to hold aloof. Seeing that but a handful of constabulary were at the disposal of Mr. Fort, the resident magistrate at Umtali, it was of importance that the King should be brought to reason before the resistance to authority spread further. The insolent savage had been treated with great forbearance, which he probably mistook for timidity ; the time had come to be firm with him and to let him clearly understand that the Company would put up with no more of his nonsense.

Therefore a message was sent to Umtassa telling him that the brother of the great white *induna* in Capetown had come to Umtali and that this would be an excellent opportunity for Umtassa to come in and confer at an *indaba*, when all difficulties between them might be settled and Colonel Rhodes would carry the words of Umtassa to his brother in Capetown. Umtassa shuffled as usual, would not give a reply for twenty-four hours, and then sent word that he was an old and feeble man and could not travel all the way to Umtali, but would be glad to receive the white men in his own kraal.

On former occasions when Umtassa had made similar appointments he had intentionally kept the white men waiting for hours exposed to the jeers of his people before it suited his royal whim to come forth and see them. Mr. Fort would not risk a repetition of this indignity. He now sent Umtassa a more peremptory message to the effect that the white men would not go to the kraal, but that he was willing to make a compromise as Umtassa was an old man ; the white men and Umtassa should meet on the banks of the River Odzani, half way between Umtali and the king's kraal, and there the *indaba* should be held ; but that, if Umtassa did not come, all negotiations between the two parties would be at an end, and the Chartered Company would

compel the king to forthwith pay the full hut tax on every hut in his country. Umtassa thought it prudent to comply with this invitation, for the fame of the great *induna* at Capetown had reached him across a thousand miles of forest and veldt, and he knew how far reaching was his arm.

Accordingly Mr. Fort, Colonel Rhodes, Mr. Herbert Taylor (now Chief Native Commissioner in Matabeleland, the only survivor of all that gallant company of good fellows that I met in Rhodesia) and myself rode off one morning to Umtassa's drift on the Odzani, taking with us some boys to carry our tiffin and a Zulu policeman to act as interpreter. But that we might inspire Umtassa's people with confidence and show that we came as friends, we were accompanied by no escort and none of us was armed. We found no one awaiting us when we reached the drift, which is about four miles from Umtassa's stronghold. From here we had a good view of the precipitous peak among whose crags his kraal is situated, and it certainly looked as if it was impregnable, if properly defended. We had just finished tiffin when some natives came up headed by Mantica, an influential *induna*. He informed us that the king was on his way to meet us, but that he was accompanied as befitted his rank, by a large retinue of armed men, and wished to know if we had any objection to this.

The magistrate repled that Umtassa could bring as many armed men as he liked with him. Mantica having courteously shaken hands with us, went back to Umtassa, and shortly afterwards we saw a picturesque procession winding through the bush and long grass to the farther bank of the stream—the king and about three hundred followers, clad for the most part in blankets and bracelets, but some wearing old red British infantry tunics and Portuguese uniforms ; all were armed to the teeth with battle axes, assagais, bows and arrows, and muskets, the latter being Portuguese flintlocks, Martinis and repeating rifles. On reaching the river bank they halted, lit fires, squatted round them, and apparently held a consultation.

After a little while the king's son, Zimbazo, and five followers crossed the river to us and informed the magistrate that his father had arrived and was ready to

see us. Mr. Fort replied that he and Mr. Rhodes were ready to receive the king and were waiting for him to cross the stream and join us ; we had a seat prepared for him. To this Zimbazo made answer that according to their law so great a chief as Umtassa could not cross a river to meet us, the white men must cross to him.

It was evident that the savage potentate was, after his usual fashion, manœuvring to humiliate the Chartered Company's officials and to display his own importance before his people. So the king's son was informed that Colonel Rhodes, the brother of the great white *induna*, and the magistrate, the officer of the Company, were greater chieftains than Umtassa, and consequently could not cross the river to him ; they had come all the way to meet Umtassa as friends, and if Umtassa did not come to hear the words of Colonel Rhodes, it would be the worse for him and his people. " These," said the magistrate, " are my last words."

So Zimbazo had to wade across the stream again with this message for his father, and in order to satisfy the exigencies of this tedious Kaffir etiquette, three more hours were wasted in parley over this delicate question of the crossing of a stream. Both sides were firm on this point. There was much going to and fro of messengers and it looked very much as if the *indaba* would never take place. Umtassa sent Mr. Fort a goat as a present and urged that he could not break the laws of his country, but offered to send over five boys to carry us across the water. The messenger returned with a repetition of Mr. Fort's refusal. Then the king sent over to say that he would die if he crossed the river ; he had never done so since he had been king. Mr. Fort still remained obdurate, but sent Mr. Taylor, an old friend of the king, across to explain to Umtassa that it would be a serious matter for him and his people if he persevered in his obstinacy.

Umtassa's next messenger brought the magistrate a present of a sovereign, and a repetition of the king's refusal to do as he was bid. Then Mr. Taylor again crossed the river to Umtassa and put things so strongly to him that prudence prevailed over royal pride and after a while we saw a great bustle on the farther shore and the king,

with all his motley crowd, forded the river and came to us. Umtassa was carried on a man's back. He was wrapped in a piece of blue limbo and wore a 7th Dragoon Guards' helmet. He sat down on the seat that had been prepared for him, looking very angry and sulky. By his side were his cup bearer, his snuff bearer, and his battle axe bearer, and his followers squatted round us in a ring. The *indaba* lasted until after sunset, for the words of the magistrate and Colonel Rhodes had to be first interpreted into Zulu by the native constable and thence into Mashona by another man, while the king's long speeches also had to pass through the mouths of these two interpreters.

Throughout the proceedings the king kept turning his eyes upon me with an expression of awe, for I was playing the part of a scribe and taking copious notes. Umtassa evidently thought that I was taking down all his words to convey them to Cecil Rhodes.

The magistrate explained that the Company was the ruler of the land, and wished to live in friendship with the blacks, but must be obeyed, and made it clear what things the Company demanded of Umtassa, as of every other chief in the country. If Umtassa had any complaint to make, let him now speak his heart, and Colonel Rhodes would carry his words to the great white chief in Capetown. To this Umtassa made no reply for some time, but sat stolidly, occasionally taking snuff. At last he spoke, and while he did so all his followers clapped their hands rhythmically in applause. The firm attitude taken up by the Company's representatives had evidently overawed the savage and his words were conciliatory. He said that the white men were his friends and that he would pay the hut tax imposed by the Company, and would himself visit the different kraals in his country and impress on the *indunas* the necessity of obeying the Company's orders. He had no other words to say.

The magistrate told him that as he had come in and proved his friendship to the white men, the Company would not at once exact the full tax of ten shillings a hut, but he must send in as earnest within seven days, five pounds, two head of cattle and a little ivory; and in a month's time they would meet again and come to some

arrangement as to the payment of the rest. Umtassa agreed to this, and after the exchange of courtesies the *indaba* closed, and we returned to Umtali. This *indaba* produced an excellent effect in the neighbourhood, for Umtassa had so far set an example of defiance, had never deigned to come out of his kraal at the bidding of the white men, and this was the first time that he had consented to discuss the position at an official interview.

A few days later Colonel Rhodes, Mr. Herbert Taylor and myself set out to walk to Beira, two hundred and thirty-five miles distant. To walk was then the only possible way of reaching this part of the east coast, for the Beira railway had not been constructed, and the tsetse fly, whose bite is fatal to horses and cattle, infested all that low-lying region. But in the fly belt, lions, buffaloes, and all manner of big game abounded. A few marches brought us to the lowlands of Mozambique, where the rank vegetation of the forests told us that we were well within the tropics. The construction of the Beira railway had commenced, and we came across the working parties at seventy-five mile peg. The digging up of the soil was deadly work in this unhealthy country, and we found the white engineers nearly all down with fever, as too were many of the native navvies.

One day we were walking through twelve feet high grass, following the narrow native track in single file, when I, walking ahead of the others, suddenly came upon an open space and saw before me a surprising group.

" Why, here are some white women bathing in a river," I exclaimed.

" You must have a touch of the sun," said Rhodes, who was behind me.

But as he emerged from the suffocating heat of the elephant grass, he too saw as I did. There were six naked white women bathing quite unconcernedly in a pool of a crystal stream, while a grave looking man stood awaiting them. He was a Japanese and came up to us bowing politely. He knew who Colonel Rhodes was and addressed him.

" I, with this party of Japanese girls are tramping up to Bulawayo. We wish to start a musical café there,

showing Japanese dancing and feats of jugglery. Can your Excellency say if it will be allowed ? "

" That will be the affair of the magistrate there," said Colonel Rhodes ; " I think it may be allowed if you conduct yourself properly, but there are no buildings there yet."

" As far as conduct is concerned," said the Japanese pointing to the giggling girls, " these ladies are pinks of propriety, and as for a building, we will soon construct our café."

Thus they were walking confidently and merrily over five hundred odd miles of wild Africa to the Promised Land. These probably would be the first women of a civilized nation to reach Bulawayo. An enterprising people the Japanese.

From Beira Colonel Rhodes and myself took the first steamer to Capetown, where I stayed for over a month ; for the conversations that I had on the road with my delightful travelling companion inspired me with the idea of writing a book on the northward advance of the British Empire in Africa since 1882, an expansion due to the foresight and labour of Cecil Rhodes, who ever thwarted the cunning efforts of the Transvaal and Germany, that were then doing their utmost to occupy the region between Damaraland and the Transvaal, and so cut us off from the right of way to the north and the Promised Land, and that failing, attempted to obtain concessions from Lobengula, and so cut us off still farther to the north. The aggression of the Portuguese also had to be defeated. And all this Cecil Rhodes effected despite the opposition of colonial prejudice and the complete indifference of the English to all affairs South African.

The Chartered Company favoured my plan and gave me a room in their office in Capetown and placed before me documents of all sorts, which afforded most interesting information as to the intrigues of Germany and the doings of the adventurous agents both of Germany and of Rhodes in those wild northern regions, racing each other to obtain concessions from this chief or that, and hoisting the flags of their respective countries when they were successful. There was profound peace in Europe, but on several occasions little actions were fought between

the followers of the British agents and those of Germany and Portugal.

Even as far north as Lake Nyassa and Lake Tanganyika did Rhodes' agents forestall the Germans and Portuguese. The way these things were done by Rhodes' agents, the hardships endured, the perils incurred by these adventurous men who—unlike the Portuguese agents, who were always accompanied by large bands of armed men—plunged alone into these savage regions to carry out their hazardous missions, makes a wonderful story indeed of British pluck and enterprise. During my stay in Capetown I saw a good deal of Cecil Rhodes, and fell under the charm of that great man who thought in continents, and whose (to many visionary) anticipation of a Cape to Cairo open route for the British has at last been realized. I returned home with voluminous notes and worked hard on the book for several months.

CHAPTER XV

The French Madagascar war.—Running the blockade.—Fort Dauphin.—A long march. — Blackmailing kings. — Savage wakes. — James. — Bara raiders. — Antananarivo.—Maids of Honour.

BUT this book was never finished, for *The Times* now sent me to a succession of wars as their special correspondent, and long before I was free again the history of South Africa had so much developed that I should have been compelled to write my narrative all over again. I still have the uncompleted book and the material given me in Capetown. They may be of use some day. I was at work in Cornwall when, at Christmas, 1894, a telegram from *The Times* instructed me to proceed to Madagascar without delay. The French, it will be remembered, had established a sort of protectorate in Madagascar and had a resident with a bodyguard in the capital. But the Hovas under their Queen resenting French interference in their affairs, had driven all the French out of the island save from two or three seaports, which were still held with small garrisons. The French accordingly were about to despatch a formidable expeditionary force which was to land at Majunga on the north-west of the island and effect the subjugation of the Hovas. *The Times* had wished me to accompany this expedition ; but the French Government, when applied to, refused to grant the necessary permission ; no foreign correspondents would be allowed with the French troops, and even French correspondents were made so unwelcome that they all returned home before hostilities commenced. So *The Times* decided to send me to Antananarivo, the Hova capital, to see the fighting from the Hova side.

To get there I had to elude the vigilance of the French, for they would allow no Englishman bent on such a mission as mine to land at any port in Madagascar. I took the precaution of booking my passage for Mauritius instead of a Madagascar port, for agents of the French Government were inspecting the passenger lists of the Castle Company, being on the look out for British adventurers who were seeking service in the Hova army,

and people like myself. Sir Donald Currie gave verbal instructions to Captain Pierce, the skipper of the *Dunbar Castle* (who was drowned a little later when his ship, the *Drummond Castle* was lost off Ushant) to land me somewhere on the east coast of the island before the ship called at Tamatave, the port held by the French.

At the advice of Captain Pierce, I did not go on shore at Durban, for the Company's agent there suspected that passengers for Madagascar were on board. He had been warned by the French Consul as to the consequences to the Company if they ventured to land a passenger at any port save Tamatave, and he wanted Pierce to let no one land in Madagascar who had not a French passport. Pierce said nothing, but he was of an adventurous spirit and no shirker of responsibility. In defiance of the agent he was determined to fulfil the promise that he had made me, and assured me that he would succeed in landing me somewhere on the island.

At last we came to the bay of Fort Dauphin, which is near the extreme south of Madagascar. Fort Dauphin is a tiny little place dominated by the ruins of a fort, built by the French in 1646, when Richelieu attempted to establish a colony here. It was soon abandoned to pirates and raiding savages. Over the fort flew the Hova flag, and there were no French gunboats in sight. So it was decided that I should be put on shore here. With me was the Rev. J. Pearse, a missionary who had joined us at Durban, a man who probably understood the languages and the people of the island better than any other white man. He had decided, instead of going by Tamatave, to accompany me as far as his mission station at Fianarantsoa, which is about half way from Fort Dauphin to the capital. In reply to a signal, a lighter came off manned by naked savages, who took us through the surf and landed us on the sandy beach.

We were hospitably received by Mr. Ralf, a trader, the agent of Procter Brothers, and what I learnt from him of the state of things was not at all satisfactory. He told me that the whole country was in a very disturbed condition. In the south the Hova rule had always been extremely weak. The small Hova posts were on the coast and were far from each other. Fort Dauphin was

the southernmost of these ports, and the nearest post to the north was one hundred and fifty miles away. The interior was practically unexplored and inhabited by savages of low type. The Antandroy tribesmen were plundering and murdering in the neighbourhood. They were reported to be advancing on Fort Dauphin, whose garrison of one hundred listless Hova soldiers, armed with rusty Sniders, would easily be overpowered. To the west and north of Fort Dauphin the tribes were engaged in waging war on each other. The natives had ceased to bring in rubber and *rafia* from the forests and the traders were unable to carry on any business. Mr. Ralf said that it might be impossible to engage carriers to accompany us to the north.

We went to the Fort to pay our respects to the Governor. We found him sitting with his officers all attired in the graceful snowy Hova *lambas*. These light-complexioned Hovas, with their gentle courteous ways and intelligent, often refined, faces, were in strong contrast to the savage coast people, black of skin, with hideous features, of low type, having Papuan mops of hair, and naked save for the loin cloth. The Governor, whose office it was to help Europeans who wished to hire carriers, promised much but could do nothing. The natives whom he summoned to the Fort to put our needs before them, openly jeered at him. The Hovas, whose home was in the centre of the island, the only partly civilized race in the country, had lost all the little authority they ever had over the rest of Madagascar.

The situation for me seemed pretty hopeless. Antananarivo was six hundred miles away to the north, and Majunga, where presumably the Hova troops were concentrating, was three hundred miles farther on. The greater part of our way to the capital lay through an unknown and roadless country. We would have to wade for days through vast unhealthy swamps, cross many broad rivers, penetrate primeval forests and we should always be harassed by hostile tribesmen.

We could not dispense with carriers to carry our belongings and the trade goods, wherewith to buy provisions from the natives. Day after day passed by and no carriers were to be got; and I was very impatient to

get to the distant front. In almost any other country of the world I would have walked to my destination by myself, and indeed I could have done so if I had been farther north among the Hova people. But it would be impossible to do this through the inhospitable southern tribes, the most detestable people I have ever met. I perceived a little schooner lying at anchor inside the coral reef, which had been left there by some Frenchman. I suggested to Mr. Pearse that we should sail her between us to some little port in the more civilized north. Mr. Pearse did not altogether approve of my scheme.

" You may call it borrowing," he said, " but to me it savours of piracy."

I had to allow that mine was not exactly the orthodox way of chartering a vessel. I tried to prove to him that we were undoubtedly acting as the benefactors of the French owner if we temporarily annexed his vessel, as she would be looted if she remained at Fort Dauphin, whereas we could leave her in safety in a northern port.

I was about to carry out my piratical design when we heard that some carriers had come into Fort Dauphin from the north, men from the central provinces through which we had to pass, who were anxious to return to their homes. They should have been glad to accompany us, for white men are seldom molested in Madagascar, and to be the follower of a white man serves as a protection to a native traveller. To cut the story short, after a great deal of disputing we persuaded a party of bearers to come with us. They were all armed with spears, but had no firearms.

We travelled sometimes along the sands of the seashore, sometimes through jungles, forests and swamps, and often had to cross broad rivers full of crocodiles. We forded many of these, but at some found natives who ferried us across in canoes. At this season it rained steadily every night, and several of us suffered from fever. In consequence of the fever, we had to walk a great part of the way as the palankeen bearers got ill or pretended to do so. We had to stay each night in the villages of robber and blackmailing kings—all these petty chiefs are called kings in Madagascar. Mr. Pearse, who had never before travelled in the barbarous south, said that in al

his thirty years' experience of the island he had never encountered so many difficulties on the road, or met with so disagreeable and grasping a lot of savages.

For example, we once passed the night in a noisome village called Mahavalo. The inhabitants made us pay in advance at an exorbitant rate for the lodgings they provided and the rice which we purchased (we lived principally on rice during this journey). In the morning we proceeded with our men in a heavy downpour of rain to the bank of the broad deep river which flowed by the village, the king and his spear-armed bodyguard following us. There was a large dug-out awaiting us and our men were just about to place some of our baggage in her, when at a word from the king one of his followers leapt into her and paddled her a few yards from the shore. Then all his effusive politeness slipped off the king, who turned on us with a malevolent smile while his people giggled at our discomfiture. He told us that he would not ferry us across the river unless we gave him about half the trade cloth that we carried with us.

Had we submitted to these demands the story of our weakness would have gone before us, each king would have required his blackmail of us, we should soon have been left without any goods to barter, and so would have starved in the wilderness. The river was deep and half a mile wide. We might have had to follow its swampy bank through an uninhabited country for days before coming to another canoe ; and there was no rice to be obtained until we reached a village on the farther side of the river. The king thought that he had got us in a trap.

I drew my revolver, which was unloaded, and as I stood in front of the king who eyed me uneasily, I inserted the six cartridges into the chambers, one of my bearers, who had seen me use it, taking it upon himself to give the king a most exaggerated account of its deadliness. Then, Mr. Pearse acting as interpreter, I told the king that we would give him one dollar, ample payment, if he would take us across the river, but that if he did not accept these terms, I would fire at the man in the canoe, and make him bring her back to the shore, that I would stand by with my revolver in front of the king

until I had seen all our men and baggage across, and that I should shoot his majesty himself, if he ventured to interfere with me or move from where he stood.

The king shuffled from one foot to the other, and evidently felt uncomfortable as he squinted down my revolver barrel. I had my way, and after making several passages the canoe transported us all across the river. I was the last to cross and took the king with me, much against his will, for he was at war with the tribe who occupied the other side of the river. We made him go on shore and paid him his dollar ; then Mr. Pearse made a long speech in which he rebuked him for his abominable treatment of strangers, and all the while men of his enemy's tribe, who had come up to see who we were, surrounded and scoffed at the wretched man. We saw him back to his canoe and on the way home before we left the spot, for to leave him to the mercy of his enemies would have been unkind.

And so we went on from blackmailing village to blackmailing village. We had trouble everywhere. Once in the Tanala country we came to a village where a relative of the headman had died and over his corpse the usual savage wake was being held. All through the night the people got drunker and drunker on vile rum imported from the French island of Bourbon. The tomtoms beat furiously, the dancing and savage howling proceeded. Fortunately our carriers, fond of rum as they were, were afraid of the Tanala and hid themselves during this orgy.

Maddened by drink, one of the principal Tanala " recognized " me as a Frenchman who had taken him and some other tribesmen as carriers to the west and there left them without paying their wage. He vowed that he would prevent our departure on the morrow, until we had paid him in full. During the night tribesmen would occasionally thrust spears through the papyrus-leaf sides of the hut in which we slept, or rather watched, revolver in hand. On the following morning, before we made our start I searched the village for the man who had threatened to detain me ; I could not find him. No doubt feeling very sorry for himself after all the bad rum he had drunk, he had quietly hidden himself away.

As for our carriers, they gave us infinite trouble. Whenever we got to a more or less civilized village, where they were not afraid of robbers, they painted the place red. They got very drunk and refused to go on without more pay, five franc pieces chopped up into little bits. In the morning after one of these orgies, we had great difficulty in getting them away. When we had at last mustered them outside the village they were always surrounded by a screaming rabble demanding money. It appears that our rascals had " bilked " all the people with whom they had dealings in the village and were now beset by irate men from whom they had purchased rum, and half naked women who were frail but certainly not fair.

I managed to keep some sort of order, and at any rate prevented desertion of the men by refusing to pay them any of their wages until we should arrive at the capital. I told them that they could leave me if they liked, but that in that case I should walk on by myself. I had proved to them that I could walk ; it is a theory of the Malagasy that the palankeen-riding white man cannot use his legs. At last we came to Ambohimandroso, the first mission station of the L.M.S., and here I had to leave Mr. Pearse, who had a bad attack of fever, and was to remain in the care of the missionary until he should be sufficiently recovered to proceed to Fionarantsoa.

We were still two hundred and seventy miles from the capital, but had passed the region of the robber kings, though the Bara tribesmen to the west of us frequently made raids on this road, and from one village alone had recently carried away five hundred head of cattle and three hundred captives. They used to sell the captives to the Arab slave dealers, whose dhows frequented the creeks of the west coast. We passed wrecked and still smouldering villages, and saw unfortunate people gathered in groups upon the hilltops guarding the cattle they had saved ; we came to one burning village not an hour after the raiders had retired.

I happened to pick up a carrier who was the one Christian convert among my pagan followers, and I depended on him as interpreter, for he had learnt to read and write English in mission schools ; his name was James. He was a quiet young fellow, a teetotaller

and non-smoker. I observed that he kept a diary in which he entered his notes with praiseworthy regularity. I saw this book on one occasion and was surprised to find in it long rows of names and figures. It seems that James, who did not waste his substance on riotous living, was in the habit of lending his money at the usurious rate of one hundred per cent. to his thriftless heathen companions whenever they required the wherewithal to pay for a debauch in a village, and so incidentally to delay my journey. He kept all his moneylending accounts in this diary. When we reached the capital, he came up smiling to me with this book, explained matters, and asked me to pay to him such sums as were due to him from the men and to deduct this amount from their wages. I would have nothing to do with the business and paid each man his due. So James went away lamenting, and I doubt whether he recovered much of what was owing to him.

After a thirty-three days' journey from Fort Dauphin, I reached the spacious city of Antananarivo, the Hova capital. Mr. Porter, our Vice-Consul, extended the hospitality of the Consulate mess to me, and I stayed with him until the close of the war. From him I learnt all the news. Colonel Shervington, the military adviser to the Hovas, and his officers, far from being at the front, had sent in their resignations and left the island in disgust. The Government had persistently neglected to follow their recommendations. No troops were being sent towards Majunga, and no preparations were being made to meet the enemy. There could be no doubt that treachery was crippling the defence. The French, it seemed, had not yet effected a landing at Majunga. I found that the late Mr. Bennett Burleigh of *The Daily Telegraph* was a member of the Consulate mess. He had come to the capital before the ports were closed by the French. He had been doing his utmost to get permission from the Hovas to go to the front, if there was one, but all his attempts were in vain. Ultimately, Burleigh was recalled by his paper, and was, I think, sent to Ashanti.

I thought it best to stay on and I did my best to overcome the opposition of the Government. Many plans I tried without success. Thus on one occasion some

Arab traders came from near Majunga to complain to our Consul of attacks that had been made on them by certain Indian banians, British subjects. They produced the bloodstained shirt of a murdered man to testify to their statements. They demanded an enquiry and justice. So through Mr. Porter it was put to the Prime Minister that it was necessary to take the evidence of the people concerned, and that I, as the only British barrister in the capital, should at once be sent to the scene of the disturbance to put things straight. But the wily Prime Minister smelt a rat, and replied that he could not see his way to allow any European to risk his valuable life by travelling through that very disturbed part of the country. The Arabs and Indians were therefore allowed to fight it out among themselves. At last I realized that I should never obtain permission to follow the elusive Hova armies, so, as I could not go to the front, I made up my mind to wait till the front should come up to me, and I had to wait five months.

In my book, "Madagascar in War Time," I have described the state of things that prevailed at that time in the Hova capital, that headquarters of a sham civilization, a sham war office, a sham foreign office, and a sham religion; the corruption, treachery, cowardice, and incompetence of the Government and the people. The Queen could summon her warriors in their hundreds of thousands; rifles and ammunition were not lacking; the Hovas had far better artillery than any the French could bring against them; of cattle and rice, the supply was unlimited. Had the Hovas possessed a tithe of the pluck of the Matabele the handful of fever-ridden Frenchmen that took the capital could have been cut up over and over again.

There were soon signs to show that the position of Europeans in the capital was becoming dangerous. There was much talk of coming revolution. Threatening notices were posted on the doors of white traders. In the independent native churches the pastors preached against the English, saying that we should all be compelled to fight for the Hovas. One preacher in his sermon reminded the Europeans of the words, "He who is not with Me is against Me," when a prominent member of his flock

called out, " Any man who has sympathy with the French must be killed, even under this sacred roof." The soldiers too made a practice of insulting and threatening the English, even the most respected missionaries, when they passed them in the street. A native Quaker missionary went through the large camp outside the capital reviling the Europeans as white rats and spies of the French, and urged the soldiers to treat us as such.

So far, the churches ruled by the missionaries remained faithful, and the anti-European feeling was confined to the native independent church, which elects its own native pastors, and is established on the lines of English Congregationalism. I was present at the opening of a new chapel of this denomination by the Queen. All the Hova fashionable world, dressed in European costume, was there. I took my place in the gallery and was soon surrounded by the Queen's maids-of-honour attired smartly in chic Paris hats, bright coloured silk dresses and dainty shoes. Anyone in the congregation was allowed to get on his feet and have his say. The Queen herself, a woman of pleasing features, spoke for a while in a musical voice. The head of the police sang a solo, and a certain statesman, one of the most notorious scoundrels in the country, an extortional tax farmer and a blackmailer, preached at great length. This man, by the way, had to pay for his many sins when the French came in. The whole service was, of course, conducted in the Hova tongue.

This service lasted more than four hours. The poor little maids-of-honour were not at all comfortable. They put on their gorgeous Parisian attire only on state occasions ; and so had never thoroughly accustomed themselves to the confinement of stays, shoes, stockings and gloves. Several of the young ladies fidgeted about uneasily with their hooks and eyes and shoestrings. At last one and then another who sat immediately in front of me could support the pain no longer. After glancing over their shoulders at me with demure smiles they took off their shoes and then proceeded to unhook the back of their dresses. They had some difficulty in doing this and I was wondering whether it would be a breach of Hova Court etiquette for me to assist them in the operation,

when their neighbours came to their rescue and loosened them all round. The Hova ladies practise their unpleasant habit of snuff taking in the churches. The snuff is not employed after our method, but is thrown into the mouth, and after a while is spat out again. A row of ornamental spittoons was provided for the maids-of-honour, of which they made frequent and noisy use.

CHAPTER XVI

A curious censorship.—Palace intrigues.—Plot to poison the Queen.—I am deputed to help her to escape to the French.—The French defeat the Hovas outside the town.—The bombardment of Antananarivo.—French victory.—Go to Tamatave.—Home.

AT last news came to us that the French Expeditionary Force had landed at Mojunga, and had started on its long march inland through the deadly swamps, losing men of fever and dysentery in such numbers that the French were appalled, and had good reason to regard Madagascar as the white man's grave.

Mr. Porter summoned a meeting of British subjects at the Consulate. After describing the situation, he urged all Europeans to leave for the coast without delay with their wives and families. Then members of the mission societies in turn addressed the meeting. Some of them seemed to take it as a personal affront that laymen of common sense should have been at the pains to have a thought for the families of the missionaries. They urged that it was their duty in the hour of peril to remain with the people under their ministry. Several speakers declared that they had decided not to remove their families, and that such influence as they might possess would be exerted to bring their fellow missionaries to a like way of thinking. But the majority of the missionaries held different views, severely criticised what some had said on their behalf, and agreed to send away their wives and children.

But not so the Quakers. One of them assured us that he possessed an inner voice which had enjoined him to stand to his post and had assured him that the lives of all his people would be preserved throughout the time of danger. Later on Quaker missionaries with their wives and families were massacred, including this man, his wife and his child. The majority of the missionaries would take no steps to defend themselves if attacked. The rest of us therefore who had no relish for martyrdom and preferred, if we had to die, to make a decent fight for it, prepared

the Consulate as the rallying point in case of the Hova mob breaking loose.

Mr. Porter provisioned the Consulate from his stores ; we had a number of sacks, some filled with flour or sugar, and others which could have been rapidly filled with earth wherewith to block up the lower windows ; seven of us in the Consulate had firearms of some description, and we acquainted British subjects in the city—Mauritian creoles, Arabs and Indians—with our plans. They too provided themselves with arms and ammunition and were ready to take refuge in the Consulate should the danger become really serious. Many of the missionaries agreed to come to the Consulate ; but of course the Quakers refused to go into any house where there were men carrying arms ready to defend themselves. They preferred, if attacked, to fold their arms and die like sheep.

In the meanwhile I was sending articles to *The Times* in which I exposed the corruption and treason of those in charge of affairs here, who were crippling the defence and betraying the Queen. There was a queer system of censorship at Antananarivo. One of the chief censors used to come to the Consulate once a week to read over such letters as we proposed to send. He used to cut a passage here and there out of the most innocent family letters : thus he erased the crosses at the foot of a letter addressed by a mother to her child, because he imagined these to be in cipher and could not believe that the marks represented kisses. But with impassive countenance he used to read through my letters containing all sorts of incriminating communications, altered not a word in them, smilingly approved of them, placed them in his bag with the other letters, and assured me that they would at once be forwarded to England.

Now not one of these letters ever reached its destination. And yet every one of them was duly published in *The Times*, no doubt to the great astonishment of the Hova Government ; for *The Times* used to reach the capital regularly. The stories that I told of the disreputable intrigues in the Palace must have exasperated the treacherous courtiers, and have made them wonder from what sources I obtained my information. Yet this solemn task of reading, passing and then keeping back

letters, which by some magic were printed in London, was enacted between myself and the censor each week, until the very eve of the capture of the capital by the French.

This was my plan : Death was the penalty for attempting to smuggle letters to the coast, and travellers were closely searched ; but I found native pedlars who were willing to risk their lives by carrying letters for me to the nearest seaport, Vatomandry ; there they were delivered to an agent of mine who gave the pedlar a pound and handed over the letters to the first Castle steamer that called. These letters were copies in flimsy of the letters which the censor had read and passed, so he could say nothing. I used to roll the copy into as small a space as possible, and jam it into the bottom of the carrier's snuffbox, a bit of bamboo about six inches long. A false bottom would then be driven in on top of the letter, and the bamboo filled with snuff would present an innocent appearance that disarmed all suspicion.

I had a final interview with Rainilaiarivony, the old Prime Minister who for many years had been the virtual ruler of the country. He was clad in a yellow silk robe, wore crimson slippers with pointed toes and had a great jewel on his breast. He looked old and worn and I think his hair was dyed. His expression was amiable but inscrutable. He rose, and taking me by the hand led me to a chair. I explained my mission to His Excellency, and gave him reasons why I should be permitted to go to the front. He said that he would think the matter over and let me know ; I knew what that meant. He had no desire that I should be a witness of the absurdly futile preparations for defence which the treasonable party were arranging. Whatever his faults, the Prime Minister was no traitor. He was loyal to the Queen, but had become spiritless and senile, had lost all his power and was unable to resist the strong pro-French party. And the poor Queen, who loved her country, fed with lies, did not know in which party to place confidence.

The idea of the traitors was well described to me by a certain spy whom I employed, who, as I knew used also to spy on me. " Half the town now belongs to the revolutionary party," he explained. " They wish to get rid

of the Queen and place another lady of their own party on the throne ; they will help the French to come in, and will then say to them : ' See how we have helped you,' and they hope that this new Queen will be left in power by the French, in which case these people will get many honours and hold all the lucrative high offices."

The Hova armies were melting away through wholesale desertion. With the object of giving some heart to the garrison, an old Hova law was revived, and deserters were burnt alive at the stake in the rice fields in full view of the capital. Anti-British feeling was on the increase. One night all the graves in the British cemetery were opened by a number of men armed with pick-axes, who emptied the coffins and shattered into fragments all the crosses, gravestones and ornamental ironwork. The Hova Government was afraid to fight and afraid to surrender, so the sham defence continued. The French steadily advanced, the Hova armies threw up defensive works at successive strong positions, but always retired from them as soon as the French approached. We heard that the French had taken Andriba, one hundred and fifty miles from the capital, and were now advancing more rapidly.

Mr. G., a missionary of the S.P.C., called on me one day and bound me to keep as secret, at any rate for the time being, what he was going to confide in me. As nearly twenty-eight years have passed since then, I am at liberty to tell the story now. He told me that the pro-French party were practically keeping the Queen a prisoner in her own Palace, that at least two attempts had been made on her life, and that, in terror of poison, she was living entirely on eggs and bars of chocolate. Only one European, Miss H., a mission doctor, was allowed to have access to her. An attempt had just been made to blow up the palace with dynamite, and the Queen, in her despair, had told Miss H., that she wished to escape from the palace, and hand herself over to the mercy of the French commander, General Duchesne. She could not trust any of her own people and wished to know if any Englishman would help her to carry out the plan.

Miss H. suggested that I would carry out the task. At first the Queen would not hear of this, for she said that at the instigation of the traitors she had been on the

point of having me arrested ; she had been told that I was a French spy, she had ever stood in my way and had refused me permission to go to the front. Miss H. explained that I quite realized that she had been lied to, and said that in all probability I would be glad to help her. Miss H. then confided in Mr. G., and he had called to consult me in the matter.

The following plan was arranged the next day between Miss H., Mr. G. and myself. The Consulate was on the edge of a cliff and overlooked some irrigated rice fields, which extended to a line of low hills a mile or so away. Now by the configuration of the ground I knew that the French would make their attack from this side, although the road to Andriba was at the opposite side of the town. The L.M.S. hospital lay in the plain below the Consulate, and near it was an empty house which had been occupied by a native doctor who had recently died of smallpox. Now it would not have been possible for a European to go to the palace or to show himself anywhere near it unless he was provided with a special permit. But it was possible for the Queen to effect her escape from the palace disguised as a slave girl. Therefore it was arranged that the Queen should flee in the night to this empty house and there meet me. From the house, when the right moment came, I would escort her to the French outposts. It was settled that if at any time a messenger should come to the Consulate and present Mr. G.'s visiting card to me, I should forthwith go to the empty house and await the Queen's arrival there.

On September 26 we heard the booming of distant cannon and that night the natives in the neighbourhood of the Consulate sat in silent groups gazing in wonder on that to them strange sight—the intermittent flashing of the electric searchlights in the French camp. The front had come to us at last. During the next few days the French steadily pushed forward and on the 29th the sound of the artillery and musketry volleys waxed louder and told us that the French were driving the Hovas before them. By the evening French shells were bursting round the Consulate. It was a day of great excitement in the capital. The southern spearsmen were rushing howling-drunk through the streets, brandishing their spears.

Towards sunset we saw an excited mob hurrying across the rice fields. Like hounds pressing upon a creature at bay the shrieking men and women were running round a man whom at first we took to be their leader. He was cutting about him vigorously with a sword; then the howling pack closed in upon him and we saw no more of him. We did not realize what was taking place until some men came and exultingly announced that the Hovas had taken a French prisoner and had killed him. He proved to be an Algerian and he died fighting game till he fell pierced by a dozen spears. I heard that they caught two other Algerians. The cowardly crowd fell on them and hacked them to pieces. Then the gentle Hovas cut off their heads, arms and legs and marched in triumph through the streets to the Queen's Palace and there called out to the Queen to come out and view these bleeding trophies of their valour.

That evening after dark while we were all at dinner in the Consulate a servant brought Mr. G.'s card to me. I rose from the table, but, bound to secrecy, I could not tell Porter where I was going, and, in view of the dangerous state of the streets he attempted to stop me going out. As a matter of fact there was no danger; I had studied the lay of the land. I went into the garden at the back of the Consulate, clambered down the cliff, crept along the rice fields by the narrow dykes and reached my destination without meeting a soul. I had provided myself with provisions, pipe, tobacco, matches, a revolver and of course snuff for the Queen, and in the dark I awaited her eloping majesty. The night passed and no Queen came. The sun rose higher; by my watch it was nine o'clock in the morning, and still there were no signs of the Queen's approach. By this time an action was certainly developing; artillery and musketry fire could be heard beyond the near heights. From the further side of the ridge facing me the French shells were passing over me to fall into the city, and from the batteries near the Consulate, the Hovas were replying with their field guns. Shells that had fallen short were bursting in the rice fields round me, and French infantry appeared on the ridge.

All would have been so easy had the Queen kept the rendezvous. We should merely have had to wait until

the French had come up and then I could have gone out and gracefully presented the General to the Queen. General Duchesne was much amused when he heard the story afterwards, and told me that if the Queen's escape had come off I would certainly have received the Ribbon of the *Legion d'Honneur*. I learnt later that the Queen had been so closely watched by her enemies that she had been unable to leave the Palace.

A regiment of Hova infantry had now taken up a position under the cliff between me and the Consulate. Recognizing the fact that it would be impossible for the Queen to join me now, I decided to walk back to the Consulate. When I approached the Hova troops I saw that they looked very uncertain as to what to do with a white man, who was walking towards them from the direction of the enemy. So being unable to speak their language I assumed as far as I could the aspect of a missionary, saluted the officers, walked by unquestioned, and reached the Consulate. As I came to the top of the cliff the French troops were pouring over the ridge beyond the rice fields and firing at the Hovas under the cliff; these, after firing one volley, retired towards the town. I walked up to the Hova batteries beyond the Consulate, whence I could obtain a good view of what was going on; the soldiers received me in a very friendly manner; they had been two days without food, and were grateful for a little silver to purchase some sugar cane and raw manioc. They stood to their guns well until these were put out of action by some well directed French shell.

I need not repeat here the description of the operations that for several days preceded the final attack, of the short bombardment in which for the first time melinite was used, terrifying the Hovas, and of the final surrender of the city. So devastated by fever was the French Expeditionary Force that General Duchesne had been compelled to leave the bulk of his troops behind at Andriba, and march with a flying column of only three thousand men on the capital, which he reached in fifteen days. Seeing how greatly the Hovas outnumbered the French, they should with ease have annihilated Duchesne's little force. They did fight a little better than usual at the end, in the presence of their sovereign, but there

were at least fifty thousand regular troops opposed to the fever-weakened column of three thousand men, which included French regulars, soldiers of the Foreign Legion, Algerians and others. At one time the Hovas made a half-hearted attack on the French rear and for awhile the little column was entirely surrounded by Hova troops and hordes of howling spearsmen, but none of these had the courage to come too near.

The French when they came in deposed the Prime Minister and appointed a new one, a very fat old man. Now it was the curious custom in Madagascar that the Queen should marry the Prime Minister, and so change husbands with each change of Government. Happily Prime Ministers succeed each other much less frequently in Madagascar than in fickle England. When the Queen heard of the change of her Minister she sent for General Duchesne. He went up to the Palace and found her and all her maids-of-honour weeping bitterly. The gallant and courteous general endeavoured to console them.

" Is it true that you have appointed Rainitsimbazafy as my Prime Minister ? " the Queen cried between her sobs.

" It is so, madam," he replied.

In heartbroken accents she exclaimed : " Ah, woe is me, my first husband was an old fat man, my second husband whom you have deposed is very aged, and now you are going to give me as Prime Minister and husband an older and a fatter man than either of them ! "

She was greatly relieved when the General explained that in the matter of marriage she would be left perfectly free to follow her own inclinations.

" Then will you marry me and be Emperor of Madagascar ? " she exclaimed.

The General had to break it gently to her that he was already a married man. Later on she was exiled to Algeria, where, I believe, she married a Frenchman. I am happy to say that those who belonged to the traitor pro-French party, far from receiving from the French the honours expected were treated by them with contempt, and were deprived of the government offices which had enabled them to enrich themselves by the oppression of the people.

I stayed in Antananarivo for a few days after the entry of the French, and was struck by the excellent behaviour of the troops. I astonished some of those with whom I conversed by my knowledge of the slang of the African soldier, and had to explain that I had lived with the Algerian army before most of them were born.

At that time there was no telegraph from Antananarivo to the coast, and though the Queen had despatched a message to Admiral Bienaimè, the Governor of Tamatave, informing him that peace had been made, it was doubtful whether it had reached him, and it was said that a large Hova army, which for all these months had been holding the strong position of Farafatrana commanding Tamatave, was still shelling the town. I decided to walk to Tamatave two hundred miles distant—to catch the next homeward bound steamer, and got some carriers to accompany me. General Duchesne entrusted me with dispatches for the Governor of Tamatave, but warned me that the journey might be attended with some risk, as possibly fighting was still going on outside the port. As a matter of fact on the way down I met the Hova army that had abandoned its position and was marching to the capital to surrender to General Duchesne. I had a talk with the commander, the famous General Rainandrianpandry, who gave me all the news. He was a man of intelligence, respected by the Europeans, and was appointed aide-de-camp of the new Prime Minister on his arrival at the capital.

Having bidden farewell to the one Hova General who did not run away, we resumed our journey and at last reached Tamatave. I was the first European traveller who had come in from Antananarivo since its capture, and was eagerly questioned. Having heard nothing from General Duchesne, the inhabitants began to fear that his column had been cut up. Then a few days before my arrival they heard from a vessel that had come from Vatromandry the bare report that the capital had fallen, but the report could not be relied upon and there was still much anxiety. I handed my dispatches to the Governor ; these made everything clear, so the town was *en fête* at once, and while I awaited the homeward bound Messageries steamer I had to take part in the constant feasting and merry making, the lunch parties and the dances on the

men-of-war ; and my account of the capture of the capital had often to be repeated. October 21 was set apart as a general holiday and day of rejoicing, with a review of troops in the morning, a gymkhana meeting on the dunes in the afternoon, a *retraite aux flambeaux* and illuminations of the town at night. I sent off my article describing what had happened by a Castle steamer, which luckily was sailing the day after my arrival at Tamatave.

I returned home and found that my account of the fall of Antananarivo had reached England and had been published in *The Times* before any details of the affair had reached France from official sources. This caused an outcry in the Parisian press and they indignantly asked why it was left to the correspondent of an English paper to be the first to bring the good news to France.

CHAPTER XVII

The Dongola expedition.—Kitchener.—Difficulties of the expedition.—Conan Doyle.—A desert journey.—Murat Wells.—Ababdeh Arabs.—A day of mirage.—The skeleton on the rock.

I WAS not to remain long in England, which I reached in December, and had just time to see my book "Madagascar in War Time" through the press when I was marched off again to another war. One day towards the end of February, 1896, as I was sitting down to dinner in my favourite Club, the Yorick—of which I am now the oldest member, having joined it in the first year of its existence, 1888—I was told that Mr. Moberley Bell, the Manager of *The Times*, had called on me. I went to the smoking room and met him. He said:

"Come and dine with me. I have something of importance to tell you."

So I went off with him to his house in Portland Place. He told me that *The Times* had received information that Lord Salisbury had decided on the reconquest of Dongola by the Egyptian Army under Sir Herbert Kitchener. So far this decision was a secret. I was to go at once to Cairo and accompany the expedition. *The Times* at that time had a way of giving its correspondents the shortest possible notice when packing them off to distant parts of the world. Three years later for example I was told on December 24 that I had to be off the next morning, Christmas Day, to follow a Carlist war which after many false alarms never came off at all. So one always had to be ready to move, and could not leave home for even a couple of days without giving notice of one's intention to the paper.

When I landed in Port Said I saw all round me the signs of military preparations, and the coming expedition was being eagerly discussed by the people, all of whom took it for granted that nothing less than the complete overthrow of the Khalifa's tyrannical rule and the reconquest of the Sudan had been determined on by the British and Egyptian Governments. This indeed Sir Herbert accomplished. The advance of the expeditionary

force may be likened to the slow deliberate attack of some great snake. First came the work of concentration of troops and bringing up of supplies to a certain spot—the coiling up of the snake. Then a sudden spring at the enemy and the driving of him back for five hundred miles to the southward. Then at the point thus gained the coiling of the snake again, again the work of concentration, the making of railways, the preparations, and then the next spring of some hundreds of miles. Then the long pause during which concentration was again effected; and finally the spring at the throat of the enemy in his stronghold, and his destruction. For three summers, while the Nile was high and the steamers could pass the cataracts, Sir Herbert Kitchener delivered his well planned attacks which had to be successful, so thorough were the preparations between the successive blows. In this first campaign in 1896 the spring was to Dongola. In 1897 it was beyond to the Atbarah, and in 1898 came the battle of Omdurman and the final destruction of the Dervish power.

At Cairo I met Kitchener and did not by any means find him the grim personage, and enemy of the Press, that he was supposed to be. He was ready to help the correspondents in every way, but owing to the difficulties of transport he told me that I should make all arrangements for the carriage of what I required and warned me that owing to the demands of the army camels would very soon be difficult to get. He said in all probability hostilities would not commence for two months, and in this statement by the way he was correct to a day.

I travelled to Assouan with Scudamore of *The Daily News*, an old Sudan campaigner. We came to know each other very well and I was with him in several campaigns; we messed together, and when, in a war, our paths led away from each other for awhile, we agreed to share our information when we met again—an arrangement that certainly could not be made with safety with some of the correspondents I have come across. Scudamore was an ideal war correspondent of the old school, spoke six languages, Arabic and Turkish among them, was a first rate horseman and absolutely fearless. At Assouan the correspondents began to gather. The papers did not then send so many representatives to the front as they did in

later wars, in the Cuban and Manchurian campaigns for example. We were all friends of the officers and could be trusted by them.

If I remember rightly there were soon collected in Assouan, in addition to Scudamore and myself, five other correspondents—Gwynne, now editor of *The Morning Post*, Beaman, Seppings Wright, Pearse and Sheldon, all good comrades, so we formed a happy family. Others joined us later on. At Assouan we organized our commissariat, bought horses, riding and baggage camels, and engaged servants and camel drivers. We had some difficulty in getting these, for the Dervishes inspired great terror in the frontier people. Having completed our preparations, we rode together along the banks of the Nile to Wady Halfa, our advanced base, two hundred and ten miles from Assouan, and nine hundred and forty miles from the mouth of the Nile.

Conan Doyle, who was making a tour through Egypt, accompanied us on this ride, and a most genial companion he proved to be. Wady Halfa was a scene of great activity. Steamers, trains of camels, sailing *nagars* under huge *lateens*, laden with ammunition and supplies, were pouring in in a steady stream ; regiment after regiment of Egyptian and Sudanese troops were coming in, and here too was disembarked the one British regiment that was to take part in the expedition, the 1st Battalion of the North Staffords. Thirty men of the Connaught Rangers, lent by the Army of Occupation, who were attached to the Maxim Battery, forty men of the Royal Engineers and a number of British non-commissioned officers completed the British contribution to the force.

The non-commissioned officers were wonderful. They formed the backbone of the native troops. They were attached to the Egyptian Army as instructors. They leavened the native battalions with their own soldierly qualities. They often acquired the language with an astonishing facility. One day at Wady Halfa I watched for some time one of these sergeants who had been only a few months in the country, as he put through their facings his awkward squad of black Sudanese—savages many of them of low intelligence, speaking various uncouth dialects of the Sudan. And yet there was this young

Englishman contriving in some wonderful way to drive into their dull brains a comprehension of what he required of them, and obtaining marvellous results in a very short time.

These British sergeants appeared to understand the men, were patient with these clumsy but willing recruits, and for six hours daily they were carefully explaining, and vigorously abusing too when necessary in their newly-acquired Arabic, while giving the orders in Turkish, as was then the rule in the Egyptian Army, a concession to the fiction that Turkey could still call upon the Egyptian troops to fight her battles. And of course when the expedition started these sergeants marched and fought by the side of their men, carefully nursing them. Then there were the hundred and twenty-odd British officers who were serving with the Egyptian Army, and who were to lead them in battle, some tried veterans of former wars, but mostly young, carefully selected, clever and keen, the pick of the British Army. The greater part of the Expeditionary Force, twelve thousand men in all, infantry, cavalry, camel corps, and artillery, were either at Wady Halfa or had passed through it to the southern posts, so all was ready for the advance so soon as the transport had been pushed forward.

The Nile was now at its lowest. To the south of Wady Halfa it formed a series of cataracts and rapids which necessitated frequent portages. We had to rely on native sailing craft to transport the supplies from rapid to rapid, while the carriage at the portages was effected by donkeys. Sir Herbert Kitchener would have about twenty thousand mouths to feed at the front, and when it is remembered that we were advancing into difficult deserts far from the base, regions which practically supplied nothing, so that even the forage for the four thousand camels that were to accompany the expedition had to be brought from great distances, it will be realized what extraordinary organization was needed to carry through these so extensive preparations.

In the meantime our Royal Engineers, with Arab navvies, were hard at work on the construction of the railway that would later on connect Wady Halfa with Akasheh, and so much simplify the question of transport. The long line of communications was well protected, especially the

vulnerable section of it south of Wady Halfa. All the wells in the deserts that flanked us on either side were in the hands of friendly Arab tribes, Bisherin, Ababdeh and Kababish, who were well armed and constantly patrolled the desert. And our Egyptian cavalry and camel corps were patrolling the country between Wady Halfa and Akasheh, our southernmost outpost.

As there was little for us to do in Wady Halfa, Scudamore and myself obtained permission from Sir Herbert Kitchener to undertake a journey through the Nubian desert to the wells of Murat, the southernmost post held by the Ababdeh, and the nearest point to Khartoum that Englishmen have visited for many a year. We decided to ride on camels from Korosko to Murat and thence return by a direct route across the desert to Wady Halfa, in all a journey of about two hundred and fifty miles. Such a journey could not fail to be interesting. We were to see how the Arab tribes to whom the defence of the desert wells were entrusted fulfilled their duties. A caravan route crosses the desert from Korosko to Abu Hamed, a place which the Dervishes were holding in considerable force. The distance is two hundred and thirty miles as the crow flies, and the only water is found half way at Murat Wells. From its position therefore it was the most important of the desert posts. The route from Korosko to Abu Hamed through Murat Wells avoids the great loop which the Nile forms in the province of Dongola, and is quite four hundred miles shorter than the Nile route.

These brackish little pools of Murat have had their possession contested in many a fight during the preceding decade between the Ababdeh and the Khalifa's raiding bands. Major Wingate, head of our Intelligence Department, had provided us with letters to the Ababdeh sheikh Abd-el-Azim, who was in command of the Arab irregulars at Murat Wells, and also to this sheikh's *wakeel* in Korosko. The courteous *wakeel* undertook to supply us with an escort of six men of his tribe.

" Six men will be of as much use to you as a dozen," he naively explained, " for if you do encounter a party of Dervishes and cannot get away, you will probably be cut up."

He also advised us to carry a large supply of water in our goatskins, for we might have to conceal ourselves among

the rocks for days or make a long detour in order to avoid the Dervishes. It was only three weeks earlier that a band of Dervishes had made a raid on the road. We were compelled to stay several days in Korosko while our camels were being trained in the usual manner to prepare them for a waterless desert journey. For four or five days before setting out on such a journey the camel's ordinary very dry diet of chopped straw is exchanged for the more nourishing stalks of maize, and no water is given to him until just before the start, when he is allowed to drink his fill. He is thus able to travel to the next wells, a hard week's journey off maybe, without needing water.

We did not after all cross the desert under the sole escort of our six Ababdeh. We found that a company of the 15th Egyptian Battalion was about to march to Murat to relieve a company of the 13th black regiment that had been stationed there since March, when the Dervishes were reported to be meditating a determined attack on the wells. So we all set out together on May 1. It was the hottest day we had experienced. A sandstorm was raging in the desert and nothing a few yards off was visible ; the air was stifling and the only thermometer in Korosko, which was in the hospital, indicated 117 in the shade. At six in the evening there was a halt while the men prepared their food. We marched all night, halted for an hour at dawn, and then rode again till nine a.m.

And now I began to understand what wonderfully tough fellows these Egyptian soldiers were, and how ready they were, when called upon, to undertake forced marches of almost incredible severity. The men had halted at nine a.m. ; at midday, to our astonishment, they were off again to tramp it, sometimes on soft sand, through the hottest hours of the day. At six in the evening there was another two hours' halt, and then once more they marched through the night, taking only two very short halts by the way. And so these extraordinary men tramped on day and night for three days without uttering a complaint. They were travelling at least eighteen hours out of the twenty-four, and not once did they halt for upwards of three hours. For how many more days they

could have gone on I cannot say, but theirs was certainly a feat worthy of record. They accomplished this journey of one hundred and twenty miles across the desert in the hot season in sixty-five hours—that is at the rate of forty-four miles a day, and these indefatigable Egyptians did not seem to mind it in the least.

We two Englishmen were sufficiently inured to hard travelling, but we liked to know when one day's work is over and another commences, and perpetual motion was not to our taste. We therefore divided our marches after our own ideas. Thus when the soldiers at eight p.m., after their two hours' halt, moved on again, we spread our blankets on the sand and slept till eleven p.m. —and there is no more refreshing sleep than one enjoys when bivouacking in the cool pure air of the desert after sunset. Riding off again at eleven p.m. and putting our camels to the trot, we used to overtake the troops at dawn. We travelled about fifteen hours a day.

This portion of the Nubian desert is as utterly desolate as any region in the world. We perceived no signs of vegetable or animal life. There were no insects to be seen, and no vulture floated in the sky overhead. The scenery was composed of great stretches of sand and deeply serrated ranges of coal black rock. The traveller to Murat requires no guide, for this was a great trade route before the Mahdist days, and all the way it is strewn with the bleached bones of the camels that have perished in their thousands while travelling along it.

At last one morning we opened out a broad sandy basin enclosed by rugged hills of black rock, on the summits of which there were three small forts. On the sands below we saw camels, sheep and goats. These were the wells of Murat, and though we were yet afar off our camels smelling the water began to display symptoms of restlessness. Their necks stretched straight out as if dragged by some unseen influence, and their pace steadily increased. As with Sinbad's vessel when it neared the island of lodestone, so was it now with our " ships of the desert " as they approached the wells.

" We must now keep all the camels in line close together, neck by neck," said one of the Ababdeh, " or they will make a mad race for the water."

To be on the top of a bolting camel, galloping like the wind, with the action of a Cape wagon on a rocky track, is an unpleasant experience, more especially as the camel does not lessen his pace a jot until he reaches the water, when he quite suddenly, in full gallop, tucks up his legs and drops on his stomach, an abrupt fashion of stopping which is apt to leave the rider in the air to travel some dozen yards further before his lessening momentum permits him to alight. So we did not neglect the precautions recommended to us and trotted on in line, the camels each moment straining harder to be off. We held them back with ever increasing effort till our arms wearied and we had drawn the heads of the camels backwards until they almost touched the saddles. Our ride did come to a somewhat abrupt conclusion, but none of us were injured.

We were most hospitably received by Ahmed Bey, the head of the Ababdeh tribe, and his brother Abd-el-Azim Bey, the soldier of the family, who was the captain of the two hundred Ababdeh irregulars, and by the native officers of the Egyptian company. It says a great deal for the efficiency and trustworthiness of the remodelled Egyptian Army and of the friendly Arab tribes that the defence of Murat, the furthest of our posts in the Nubian desert, was left entirely to native troops, officered by natives, no supervision by British officers being deemed necessary.

The commandant and the sheikh Abd-el-Azim took us round the little post and showed us its defence. From one of the forts commanding the wells, on which two seven-pound guns were mounted, we commanded an extensive view. All round us to the far horizon stretched the desolate waste of black rocks and gleaming sands; of all deserts I should say that the Nubian is the most uncompromising desert. Not a blade of grass was to be seen even round the wells, which were merely holes dug in the sand to a depth of fifteen feet, at which depth water, brackish but wholesome, is found. The Ababdeh irregulars at Murat were almost as black as the Sudanese, but their features were purely Caucasian, and they were often singularly handsome. They were wild, fierce-looking fellows with long black hair twisted into great mops and plastered with fat. With their small hands and feet, slim

supple limbs, glistening white teeth, and lean wolfish faces, they looked what they were, the true children of the desert, men of a free and warrior race who have often fought before, and are ready to do so again, more especially when there is a big reward to be gained, as was the case on this occasion.

Abd-el-Azim led us to the scene of his last serious encounter with the Dervishes. Here in a little ravine the Ababdeh sheikh showed the spot where he had fallen on the Dervishes in November, 1893, and avenged his brother Saleh's death. The Bedouin do not bury the dead of their enemies, so the bottom of this wild ravine was still strewn with the remains of the slaughtered Dervishes. Here we saw scattered over the sand bleached skulls and bones and rags of white cloth, on which we could distinguish the square blue patches that marked the Mahdist uniform. What the vulture spares remains unchanged for an indefinite time in this dry climate ; thus, though two and a half years had elapsed since the fight, the hands and feet of the dead men, which were not stripped of their flesh, were in a perfect state of preservation, while the ground was covered with large shreds of human skin that had been converted into thick tough leather.

Having again prepared our camels for the desert journey by depriving them of water for three days, we set out for Wady Halfa, about one hundred and twenty-eight miles distant. We were seven in all—Scudamore and myself and five of the Ababdeh armed with Martini-Henry rifles. On our outward journey our escort had been supplied with Remingtons, but taking into consideration that we were not, as then, marching with a company of soldiers, and that on the route we were to follow, the risk of encountering Dervishes was greater, Abd-el-Azim had decided to arm the men with the superior weapon. Our guides told us that for the greater part of the way we should be crossing open sandy plains, where no rocks or caves afforded the traveller shelter from the fierce sun during the midday halt. We started in the evening and rode through the greater part of the night. We slept for a few hours in the morning and were off again at eleven a.m. The scenery would have been monotonous had it not been for the illusory ever-changing landscapes that

surrounded us. Never have I travelled through such a succession of mirages.

All day long we rode through an enchanted land wherein we could not be certain that anything was real save the sand immediately beneath us. On the horizon extended ranges of pleasant hills from which rivers flowed in broad belts of rippling blue. We saw lakes of breaking waves on whose shores palms and long grasses bent quivering beneath a strong wind, whose refreshing breath was unfelt by us ; for the air was quite still this day, and the breeze was but a mockery, like the water. Often too a long sea horizon stretched before us. We seemed to be descending to a wild coast with rock-enclosed fiords, sandy dunes, far-jutting promontories, while many islets were scattered over the calm sea. I think this was the hottest day I have ever known. What the temperature in the shade was I cannot say, but at any rate there was no shade. Even the Bedouin appeared to feel the heat.

We were now in quite open desert, and we rode on hour after hour over the scorching sand through the windless air, dry and burning as the breath of a furnace, between the glare of the sky and the glare of the sand, longing only that the sun would sink below the horizon and leave us in the cool dark night. And at last to our relief the sun did set ; then the mirages faded round us, the lakes and rivers shrunk up, the palms and long grasses sank into the earth, and we saw the land in all its true desolate nakedness, a dead flat waste, lonely and lifeless. Then we off-saddled and prepared our supper. How one enjoys the evening halt in the desert at the close of such a day's journey as this had been ! After sunset the radiation rapidly reduces the temperature of the heated sand and air, a cool breeze generally springs up, and one sleeps the most refreshing of sleeps as one lies on one's blanket under the starlit sky, breathing the purest air in the world.

We sent on the baggage animals with three of the Ababdeh at midnight. But we Englishmen remained where we were with the two other Arabs until two a.m., as we knew that by trotting on with our camels we could soon overtake the rest of the party. So we rode off at two, and at daybreak we expected to come across the tracks of the other camels, which our guides confidently asserted

were still ahead of us. This was an unfrequented route, so there were no skeletons of dead camels to point the way as had been the case on the road from Korosko. Our guides explained that the road here in the open desert was " anywhere one pleased," so that the camels might be " far off on either side of us, but not so far off to be out of sight, unless they had lost their way." We trotted on, ever scanning the horizon, already quivering in mirage in all directions. We at last became certain that our men were not in front of us. We must have passed them without seeing them in the night and they were still behind.

We perceived to the north of us, and apparently close to, an isolated pyramid of rock with an almost perpendicular cliff facing the west, which would afford shade until midday. We turned off and went to this rock with the intention of there awaiting our missing companions, or making it our rendezvous while we rode off to scour the desert in search of them. When we set out for it this rock seemed a few hundred yards distant. We rode towards it for half an hour when it appeared to shrink in size and to be quite five miles off; then after awhile it loomed large in front of us again; but we put no faith in its appearance and would not even assume that it had any real existence at all—for the desert was now full of ghosts—until we came at last into absolute contact with its black crags and were resting under its friendly shade.

We refreshed ourselves with a frugal breakfast of biscuits and brackish Murat water, now of a rich brown colour and having a strong flavour of the goatskins. I then walked along the foot of the cliff, seeking a way by which to scale its side and attain some point commanding an extensive view over the desert, whence I might be able to distinguish our missing caravan. On turning a spur of the hill I saw lying on the sand before me a human skull, and then, close to it, leaning against a rock a Martini-Henry rifle. On looking up I perceived just above me crouching in the shadow of a rocky ledge the skeleton of a man, his fists clenched, as he had died there in the agony of thirst. He had evidently lain there for a long time, and his head had fallen off. On examining the rifle I found that it was in good condition. There was not the faintest sign of rust on the barrel, and the lock was in

working order, but the wooden stock had been bleached white and all the varnish had been eaten off by the sun. It was an Egyptian Government rifle.

It was evident that we were the first to take shelter under this lonely rock since he had lain himself down there to die, for no native would have failed to carry away with him the Martini-Henry, a valuable article on the frontier. We took the rifle back with us to Wady Halfa, and as it was, of course, numbered, its history was soon traced. It had been served out to a man in the 7th Egyptian Battalion who had lost it several years before this and therefore had been made to replace it at his own expense. The skeleton may have been that of one of the frontier rifle thieves who used to sell stolen weapons to the Dervishes.

It was now eleven o'clock, and it was becoming rather a serious matter for us, for all the camels carrying the goatskins of water were with the others. There could no longer be any doubt that the men were lost. We therefore rode to the southward in search of their tracks. At last one of our two keen sighted guides, pointing to some black objects which appeared to be tossing on the waves of a distant lake said with confidence : " Those are men on camels."

And so indeed they proved to be when we got nearer, a small party riding through the blue waters of the mirage. We could not tell at first whether they were our own people or Dervish scouts, but it astonished us to find that whoever they were, they were travelling in a southerly direction, a route which would have ultimately brought them out on the Nile in enemy's country between Dongola and Abu Hamed. They perceived us and halted ; and riding up we soon distinguished the familiar faces of our three Bedouin. They had completely lost their way through mistaking landmarks in the mirage.

At three p.m. we were all off again on the proper track. Scared by their recent experiences the other men refused to separate from us, so we had to accommodate our pace to the baggage animals. We reached Wady Halfa at ten o'clock the next morning, having accomplished our journey of one hundred and twenty-eight miles in sixty-four hours.

CHAPTER XVIII

Akasheh.—A complete surprise.—The plan of attack.—The night march.—The battle of Firkeh.—Slatin Pasha.—Kosheh.—The cholera.—The Sirdar's cauliflower.—Galway stamps out the cholera.—His method.

AT Wady Halfa we learnt that the unflagging toil of the last ten weeks had been to some purpose. All preparations for the advance had practically been completed. Akasheh, our furthest outpost, eighty-five miles from Halfa, was to be the point of concentration before our attack on Firkeh, sixteen miles higher up the Nile valley, which the Dervishes were holding with four thousand men under Hamuda as Emir in chief, and fifty-seven leading Emirs. We correspondents rode down the line of communication to Akasheh and on reaching it on June 3 we were recommended to hold ourselves in readiness to advance with the troops at a moment's notice.

Our Intelligence Department, with Major Wingate as its able head, and Slatin Pasha as second, was very well informed as to the dispositions of the enemy at Firkeh. These Emirs at Firkeh had been specially sent down by the Khalifa to menace the frontier, and among them were several of the most notorious Baggara leaders, the scourge of the frontier, whose names were words of terror down the Nile valley. It was the object of Sir Herbert Kitchener to surprise Firkeh and secure the whole of these Emirs. To do this would be to inflict a crushing blow on the Khalifa's cause and to cripple the defence of the Dongola province. This valuable prize would have slipped his grasp had he not, with the assistance of his Chief of the Staff, Colonel Rundle, and the commander of the Infantry Division, Colonel Hunter, devised an admirable plan, which was as admirably carried into execution, and had not the closest secrecy been observed.

As it happily turned out the surprise was complete. Upwards of fifty of the Emirs were killed, and only a few succeeded in escaping to carry the news of the disaster

to Dongola. [Every precaution had been taken to put the enemy off their guard. The constant patrolling of our cavalry and camel corps made it extremely difficult for the Dervishes to reconnoitre in the direction of Akasheh and observe the preparations for the advance that were being made there. For the two days preceding the advance, when it became manifest to all that a move of some sort was intended, all our native spies and scouts were kept in Akasheh lest any traitor among them might give warning to the Dervishes.

Even nature came to our assistance, for on the day of our advance a dense sandstorm obscured the air, veiling the unusual bustle in our camp from the keen eyes of any Dervish scout who might be posted on the hills. Curiously enough, as we heard afterwards, it was on this very day that the Emir Osman Asrak ventured to reconnoitre near Akasheh. He saw nothing of our movements through the dust and unwittingly forwarded our design by lulling the Dervishes into a false security, for on his return he told Hamuda that he had looked into the camp at Akasheh and that all the troops were asleep. Little did he suspect that at that very moment we were silently marching in thousands across the desert and along the river bank to the attack.

The following was Sir Herbert Kitchener's plan of attack: The main body of the troops under his own command were to leave Akasheh on the evening of the 6th, follow the Nile valley, and bivouac three miles from Firkeh, and at four-thirty a.m. on June 7, deploy and attack the Dervish positions. In the meanwhile a second column, under Major Burn Murdoch, was to follow another route which, leaving the river at Akasheh, crossed the desert and rejoined the Nile valley half a mile to the south of the Dervish camp, thus enabling the enemy's position to be turned. This column was to occupy a position on the heights east of Firkeh village at four-thirty, and then co-operate with the river column. The river column was composed of an infantry division of three brigades, two field batteries, two Maxim guns and a field hospital—about seven thousand men in all. Each man carried two days' rations, and ninety rounds of ammunition.

The desert column was composed of a cavalry brigade of seven squadrons, the camel corps, the 12th Sudanese Battalion, a battery of horse artillery, two Maxim guns and a detail of the Medical Corps—about two thousand one hundred men in all. Major Burn Murdoch was instructed to pursue the enemy vigorously with the cavalry and camel corps should the Dervishes escape along the river bank, and unless he met with serious resistance he was to follow up the victory by occupying Suarda, thirty miles beyond Firkeh, at which place the enemy were known to have collected supplies. The routes to be followed by the two columns were well known to several British officers. The desert column was most skilfully guided on a very dark night across a trackless desert by Captain Broadwood, while the river route, which at some points quits the Nile and crosses the desert in order to avoid the rugged hills by the river side, had been reconnoitred by several staff officers to within sight of Firkeh.

All the correspondents accompanied the river column. We set out before sunset. The darkness fell as we were creeping across the desert in column order. So large a body of men could proceed but slowly and with frequent short checks, for in places we had to cross boulder-strewn slopes and traverse narrow rugged defiles. There was no moon, but occasionally we caught vague but beautiful glimpses of the palm-bordered Nile, dimly gleaming in the starlight. The column advanced so silently that when it was crossing sandy ground one could hear no sound from it if one were but twenty paces off, and a straggler would find himself immediately lost. Every precaution was taken to prevent the enemy from having any notice of our advance. No bugle sounds were employed during the march, no smoking was allowed, and orders were given that if the enemy were met with they should be dealt with by the bayonet only, and that no firing should take place during the night except under the orders of Colonel Hunter.

By a quarter past one the whole force had bivouacked. The troops as they came up halted with as broad a front as the ground allowed. Outposts were now set and water bottles were filled in silence from the adjacent river.

This night march of twelve miles was a very creditable performance when the obscurity of the night and the difficulty of the ground are taken into account. As I could see that the men were preparing to bivouac I dismounted, lay on the sand with my horse standing by my side, his reins in my hand, and slept until the signal was given to resume the march.

It was still very dark when I was awakened by the gentle stir of the preparations for the march, and I mounted and rode on with the column. When the first gleam of dawn appeared in the east, the three brigades, having reached open ground, deployed in turn into fighting formation. Two battalions of each brigade formed the fighting line, each battalion having two out of its six companies behind in support, thus enabling a square to be formed rapidly in case of a Dervish rush. The Dervishes were indeed taken completely by surprise. The desert column and the Nile column arrived simultaneously within rifle range of Firkeh unperceived. Our troops had practically hemmed in the Dervishes and cut off their line of retreat before the alarm was given. The people had just come out from morning prayer and were gossiping outside their huts when the desert column surprised a Dervish outpost to the east of the village ; the shots that were fired gave the enemy warning and their fighting men all hurried off to the positions assigned to them.

Immediately after the first shots had been fired by the Dervish outpost a brisk fire opened on the left of the first brigade, with which I was at the time, and on looking round I saw puffs of smoke hanging on the steep slopes of a rugged height about two hundred yards off. Here the enemy had an outpost, and sheltered by the boulders of the mountain and the walls of an ancient tomb, about three hundred of them had been lying in wait for us. Their fire was accurate enough, several of our men being hit. It was curious to see this little party thus defying an army as it marched by, but later in the day I saw single men behind rocks doing the same, fighting on and refusing quarter until they were killed.

A true Dervish when he makes up his mind to fight heeds not the numbers of his foes. We should have lost many men here from this enfilading fire had not our

troops concentrated a terrible fire on this outpost, the guns too opening on it with shrapnel. A large proportion of the three hundred must have been killed, and at last when a number of the men of the 9th Sudanese began to clamber up the cliffs to clear them out at the point of the bayonet, the remainder of the Dervishes took flight, ascending a narrow gully, many to be shot down by our riflemen before they could escape. The column now, after turning a spur of the mountain, came upon open ground, and before us was the straggling village of Firkeh, and the Dervish camps. And there, too, occupying every point of vantage were the horsemen and infantry of the enemy, with many a brightly coloured banner waving above them.

Our three infantry brigades were now formed in line and the force then advanced with its left thrown well forward, and the action became general—on our side a rapid and well directed volley fire, on the enemy's side a steady independent fire. Our two batteries of field artillery wrought execution with their shrapnel shell, as we perceived on the following day when inspecting the battlefield. The Maxim guns too served by the thirty men of the Connaught Rangers, who were lent by the Army of Occupation, were brought into action at different points with good effect.

The 2nd Brigade, composed of Sudanese troops under Major MacDonald, attacked the enemy's right, and cut off his retreat towards the eastern desert. This brigade advanced on the Dervishes holding the heights to the east of Firkeh, and poured in deadly volleys. Before this terrific fire many of the enemy began to fall back. On the other hand some of these indomitable warriors disdained to flee ; stubbornly remaining behind the rocky ridges, they coolly fired upon us until our Sudanese had fallen on them and killed them. Quarter was given to such as surrendered but many of the wounded Dervishes acted as is their wont. A wounded man would lie still as if dead until one of his foemen had passed him—a British officer by preference—when he would raise his gun and shoot him treacherously in the back.

I saw one wounded Dervish attempt this trick. I had ridden close to him down and had looked upon his upturned

face on which not a muscle quivered; he was to all appearances dead, but after I had proceeded some thirty yards I heard the report of a rifle behind me and the unmistakable whistle of a passing bullet intended for myself. On looking round I saw two black soldiers who had witnessed the incident run to the wounded Dervish and empty their rifles into his body.

While the second brigade was thus clearing the hills the first brigade attacked the enemy's left among the huts and palm groves of the river bank. During this attack a body of desperate Baggara horsemen charged our 4th Battalion, but the Egyptians stood firm and repulsed the Dervishes with heavy loss. The Egyptians of the 3rd Battalion charged another large party of Baggara with great spirit, completely routed them and then derided the flying enemy. This was indeed a complete turning of the tables, for up till then the Dervishes had entertained a profound contempt for the fellahin troops, and would have disdained to turn their backs on them. The troops pressed on to the huts of the Jaalin camp from which the enemy were opening fire upon us. Hut after hut was cleared, sometimes at the point of the bayonet, and there was some vigorous hand to hand fighting between the soldiers and parties of Dervishes, who rushed out into the open determined to die fighting. Quarter was repeatedly offered to them, but they refused to surrender. After the fight eighty corpses were found in one small hut alone. The 3rd Brigade passed through the Baggara camp in pursuit of the routed Dervishes.

The three brigades now converged upon the village and the river bank where the enemy were making their final stand. The desert column in the meanwhile, having reached its assigned position on the heights beyond Firkeh at the appointed time, thus outflanked the enemy and ensured his being caught in a complete trap. The Dervishes driven before the river column found their retreat cut off. I saw many of the enemy's mounted men, routed by our infantry, first gallop wildly to the south and then, finding themselves headed by our cavalry, turn in despair and gallop back upon our lines to die. The footmen, too, were to be seen hurrying to and fro seeking a way through the encircling enemy. Such as did escape

to the south were vigorously pursued by the cavalry and quite one hundred and fifty of the fugitive enemy were killed within a few miles of Firkeh. In this battle the Baggara displayed all their old courage. They stood undismayed in the open and fought with dogged determination in the face of our volley fire. They fought on with rifle and spear and knife when charged by our cavalry. They stood in groups firing steadily into our ranks while our Maxims poured their streams of bullets on them.

The battle of Firkeh opened at five a.m. ; it was over at seven a.m. Over one thousand of the enemy were killed. Their general, Hamuda, and fifty out of their fifty-seven Emirs lost their lives. A number of the enemy who contrived to cross the river on goat skins were cut off by our Arab irregulars, who were patrolling the further bank of the Nile. We captured five hundred prisoners, a quantity of arms and ammunition, a number of camels, goats and horses, and considerable supplies of grain and forage. Thus ended this well executed and highly successful military operation. That so large a force as ours would defeat the Dervishes at Firkeh was a foregone conclusion, but it was by no means certain that we should take the enemy by surprise and succeed in catching so many important Emirs in a trap.

The cavalry of the desert column followed the enemy for thirty miles along the Nile bank and, as ordered, occupied Suarda early the next morning. The Suarda Dervishes offered no resistance, but crossed the Nile in their boats, leaving their supplies in the hands of our men. Here again the horse artillery shelled the fugitives beyond the river with good effect.

Slatin Pasha, as second of our Intelligence Department, was of the greatest service at this time. He had many friends at Omdurman, and was able to communicate with the Emirs and reassure them as to the intentions of the Egyptian Government, and he spread it through the country that we were fighting the hated Baggara alone and that we had no quarrel with the other tribes, but had come to deliver them from the detestable tyranny of the Khalifa and his tribe. The result was that the black soldiers of the Khalifa and the men of the Jaalin and other tribes took every opportunity of deserting to us.

After the battle Slatin Pasha rode over the field and among the dead recognized man after man whom he had met at Omdurman during his long captivity. There were strange meetings too between him and some of the prisoners. I saw him warmly greet one well-known Jaalin Emir who had befriended the captive at the risk of his life in Omdurman and who walked with difficulty, supported by two men, for he had no less than six bullets in his body. Slatin Pasha, being an Austrian officer, went back to his own country at the opening of the Great War, but would not take any part against us ; on the contrary, he did all that was possible to make the British prisoners and wounded comfortable. He was very popular with the British officers in the Egyptian Army.

On July 5 our camp near Firkeh was broken up and moved to the ruined village of Kosheh, six miles higher up the river, for which we were glad, for the stench of the dead Dervishes at Firkeh, superficially buried in the sand, had become almost insupportable. On the day after the battle of Firkeh the Sirdar gave a dinner party to celebrate his victory. Those who depict Kitchener as a hard man should have seen him then. All his sternness had vanished, he was brimming with conviviality and fun, his face beamed with smiles, he talked freely and joked. For his anxiety concerning the manifold preparations for his plan of action had ceased for a time to trouble him ; he realized that his blow had been successful, that he had so shaken the Dervishes that he would probably reach Dongola without serious opposition, confident in the steadiness and valour of his freshly-blooded army. The next morning he was his stern self again, working as hard as ever, arranging, superintending, thinking out every detail of the work before him.

There was much interesting loot to be gathered on the battlefield and in the abandoned huts—coats of mail that dated from the days of the Crusaders, quaintly shaped spears, swords, shields and so forth. Anyone that picked up any loot was supposed to hand it over to the Sirdar ; a sale by auction would take place at the end of the campaign, and the proceeds would be distributed among the troops. Now we correspondents well knew that this auction would take place after we had left the Sudan

and that only such officers as were left behind would be present at it; so we did not give up our loot but concealed such spears, swords and other articles as we had appropriated under the sand in our tents. Captured animals of course had to be handed over. The Provost-Marshal used to pay us occasional visits to see that we were not infringing the rules. Gwynne had found a female goat which we concealed in a ruined hut adjoining our mess, and it used to supply us with milk at breakfast.

One day when we were sitting in the mess hut the Provost-Marshal called. Suddenly a faint bleat interrupted our conversation. We all talked loud to conceal the sound. The Provost-Marshal was seen to smile. Then came another louder bleat, and Seppings Wright took up his banjo and played a lively tune. There came a still louder bleat. The Provost-Marshal laughed.

"I can't pretend not to hear that," he said, and our goat had to be surrendered to him.

At Kosheh our Engineers were hard at work constructing a station and workshops in anticipation of the coming of the railway and a landing stage on the Nile for the seven steamers that were expected and for the new gunboat that was coming out in sections and was to be put together and launched here.

At Kosheh we were to have a very long halt before striking the next blow; for we had to wait for the high Nile so as to allow our steamers to pass the cataracts, and for the completion of the railway up to this point, both of which events would greatly facilitate our transport. At present we were dependent on the long trains of laden camels that were pouring along the Nile bank southwards with supplies, and on the numerous sailing craft captured from the Dervishes which served for the transport from here to Suarda. Each of these boats was manned by the crew that had been captured with her. These were not likely to play us false, for being of the local population they had no affection for the Dervishes and were well paid by us.

And now the cholera was creeping up from the Mediterranean and fell on all our camps in succession up to our farthest outpost, disjointing the arrangements on the line of communication, delaying all the work of

preparations, paralysing transport. Steadily it advanced—from Assouan to Korosko, from Korosko to Wady Halfa, and thence to Akasheh, and so on. Everything was done to check the progress of the disease, but all our supplies for a force of fifteen thousand men and a huge number of camels and horses had to come from the far north through the infected regions, and a strict quarantine was impracticable. The cholera broke out in the camp of the North Staffordshire Regiment at Temai, near Wady Halfa.

This regiment had experienced very bad luck throughout. After remaining three months on the sands of hot dusty Wady Halfa, it was left behind when we advanced, and took no part in the fight at Firkeh, and now it was sent to a cholera camp in the desert. The men were exasperated at having been left out of the "fun" and one man declared in bitter jest that the next time he enlisted he would paint himself black, as then he would have a fair chance of being in a fight. Then the cholera came to Kosheh. The disease assumed a very virulent form; its course was extraordinarily rapid, and nearly every case proved fatal. In three days we correspondents had four cases among our servants and out of the four Berberis who were building a *tokul* (grass hut) for me, two died of cholera. One day when I was dining with a colleague, his servant suddenly disappeared; we went out to look for him and found him lying dead outside. Even strangers came to our camp to die and scatter germs, for on one morning, I found a dead Berberi whom nobody knew, lying near the door of my hut. Of the first thousand cases that occurred between Kosheh and Assouan, eight hundred ended fatally.

And all the while, though cholera, enteric and dysentery were woefully thinning their ranks, our soldiers worked on cheerily under the hot sun amid the desert sands, toiling as navvies on the railway construction, making wearisome marches with the convoys, labouring on various fatigue duties. They were worked as hard as they well could be; for the necessities of war demanded this, for we had to get up the supplies or starve.

But gradually the cholera spread consternation through the army. It was as if we were perpetually under fire

from an unseen foe against whom we could not strike a blow in our defence. One spoke to a friend who was strong and hearty and later in the same day heard that he was dead. For example, one day Scudamore and myself rode a few miles down the Nile valley to intercept some Greek sutlers who had brought up articles for sale in the camp. We halted at a little post on the banks of the Nile and had breakfast with Major Fenwick, an officer of long and distinguished service in the Egyptian Army, and Surgeon-Captain Trask, who had been treating the cholera sick at Akasheh and was now on his way to Kosheh. We rode on, met the Greek sutlers, made our purchases and on our return called at the post again. Both the officers who were well and cheery when we had breakfast with them had been carried into Kosheh sick with cholera ; they died that afternoon.

It appeared that just above the above-mentioned post was moored a native boat with a man dying of cholera on board. The crew had not notified the fact, hence the infection of the water supply. Some of the finest officers in the Egyptian Army were among the victims of the cholera and most valuable lives too were lost among the civilians. Thus Mr. Vallom the Superintendent of Railway Construction, whose death threw back all the work on the railway, and Mr. Nicholson, who had been sent from England to superintend the putting together of the sections of the new gunboat, both died of cholera. In our own camp, our much esteemed colleague, H. Garrett, of the *New York Herald*, died of enteric, which was then very prevalent.

Frequent gymkhana meetings were got up to keep the troops in good spirits and keep their minds off the cholera. There were horse races, owners up, for the officers and correspondents, including a steeplechase, with a real water jump (the water having been brought up from the Nile by fatigue parties), flat races and a bare-backed race. For the Egyptian and Sudanese troops there were camel races, donkey races, foot races, tugs-of-war and so forth. It was pleasant to see how keenly the men entered into the sport and how thoroughly they enjoyed themselves, displaying the utmost good humour throughout. The correspondents too gave frequent very jolly smoking

concerts, at which the white officers and the men of the various details of white troops were present.

As all the men were busily employed during the rest of the week these entertainments, of necessity, had to be held on the Sunday. The Sirdar thanked us cordially for our enterprise which effected much good in the cholera-stricken camp. But the story leaked out that we were breaking the Sabbath in the Sudan, and those self-righteous people in England that love to spoil every sport, and during the Great War would have deprived the soldiers in the trenches of their tot of rum, began to howl. A largely signed appeal was sent to the Sirdar in which he was asked to put a stop to this ill use of the Sunday. None knew better than Sir Herbert Kitchener the power for mischief possessed by the Puritans at home, so he begged us, if further entertainments were held on the Sunday—as of course they were—to say nothing about it in our newspapers or private letters.

We correspondents were much troubled about this time by the constant disappearance of our camels. They were, no doubt, stolen by some of the camp followers and sold to the army. So in self-defence I painted my camels with purple aniline dye—broad purple rings round their eyes, necks, legs, tails and bodies, with a large *Times* clock designed on either flank. They presented a most comical appearance and aroused the whole Egyptian Army to inextinguishable laughter, as they solemnly ambled through the camp ; I lost no more camels.

But there was a certain person who even dared to pillage the Sirdar's belongings. We had given a dinner party to Sir Herbert Kitchener and some of his officers. The iced champagne which was a feature at that dinner, was a surprise to all. I had procured six bottles of reputed Moet and Chandon and had occupied a great part of the day in cooling them. I hung the bottles in a row under the blazing sun by the banks of the Nile, rolled each bottle in a blanket and poured hot Nile water over it at frequent intervals, waiting till each blanket was dry before pouring on it another bucket. The bottles were brought on the table immediately after the last drying. The result was champagne as cold as anybody could wish it

to be. This fortunately put everyone in a good temper, for a terrible disclosure followed.

My servant, Abdul, a huge black Dinka, from the equatorial swamps, had volunteered to prepare a pudding for this repast, but the secret of its composition he would not impart to anyone. Proudly he brought the *dolce*, as he called it, on the table, grinning from ear to ear. It appeared to be some sort of plum pudding, covered all over with thick black treacle. Kitchener helped himself to a slice of it, looked at it for a moment, and exclaimed :

" Why, it is my cauliflower ! "

It seems that the Sirdar had two cauliflowers brought up the river in ice. When the parcel arrived one of the cauliflowers was missing, and a good many enquiries were made, all in vain, about the loss. This *dolce* contained the missing vegetable. The Sirdar was good enough to say that this newly invented dish was not at all bad. We never got the true facts of the case from Abdul. His story was that a friend of his had found the cauliflower growing in the desert and had told him that it was a very good fruit ; so he had boiled it and covered it with treacle.

Surgeon-Colonel Gallwey, the principal medical officer of the Egyptian Army, had had a wide experience of cholera. He had been at work in Egypt throughout the epidemic of 1883, when within three months there were sixty-five thousand deaths. He had been fighting this epidemic in Egypt since its inception. When the cholera creeping up the river reached the frontier, he was summoned to the Sudan to crush this insidious enemy. He told us that it was one of the most deadly forms of cholera known, the cholera *seca*, or dry cholera, fatal in nearly every case. It had already destroyed more than fifteen thousand people. He held that whatever might be the best thing to do in other countries, in the Nile valley, bordered by deserts, the safer policy was not to retreat before it, but to make a bold stand and fight it out with the epidemic on the spot. He said to Kitchener when he arrived at Kosheh :

" This is a military camp so we ought to be ashamed of ourselves if we cannot stamp out the cholera within ten days."

As a matter of fact the last case we had occurred nine days later.

The maximum period of incubation for this form of cholera appears to be six days. In every case that was investigated the drinking water had been drawn from stagnant pools or back waters of the river, in which infected men had bathed or washed their clothes. Gallwey's first step was to move the whole camp two thousand yards back from the river. The men were not allowed to approach the river save when they were sent down in parties accompanied by officers or correspondents to draw water for the camp at appointed places which were above all the pools that had been infected. A severe flogging was the punishment for any infringement of these regulations. The cases as they occurred were strictly isolated. In whatever military camp the cholera appeared, these precautions were adopted. We had but six British surgeons under Hunter Bey to deal with this serious epidemic that had been spread through a force of fifteen thousand troops and many thousands of civilians. These surgeons throughout all that anxious time, heavily overworked, displayed the highest qualities and proved themselves men of whom their country might well be proud. The Egyptian and Syrian medical officers also proved that they were of the right stuff.

CHAPTER XIX

Fresh difficulties.—The sandstorm.—The floods.—The steamers pass the cataracts.—Concentration of troops.—The advance.—A fertile country.—The battle of Hafir.—A naval engagement.—Beatty and Colville.—The enemy retire to Dongola.—Our forces cross the Nile.—Surrender of Dongola.

THUS the cholera was vanquished, but now other difficulties arose to thwart the Sirdar's plans. In the first place the Nile, which should have been up long before, refused to rise, and our seven indispensable steamers had not been able to get past the second cataract by the middle of August for want of water. In the second place we entered a period of terrific storms. This region is marked as rainless on the map and for five years not a drop of rain had fallen, but now for nearly a month violent rainstorms were frequent, and inflicted a great deal of damage. In the third place, whereas in the autumn the prevailing wind in these regions is from the north, for weeks it now blew from the south, hot and fierce, with frequent storms. This of course was a head wind for our native craft, and they were unable to sail up the Nile with our very necessary supplies.

Of what nature were the destructive storms that swept on us may be gathered from the following description of one of them which I wrote at the time: "The rough weather culminated in a storm of almost unprecedented violence. In the afternoon we saw a long black mass like a dense fog bank rise in the desert—a huge wall of driving sand and dust that advanced upon our camp.

"'The *haboub*' cried our servants, who at once bustled about to prepare for this unwelcome visitor. Occasionally detaching itself from the dusky cloud a sand devil marched down upon us, a great column of rapidly whirling sand that sucked into its vortex bits of wood and other light substances and casting them upwards carried them along with it, fluttering wildly at the summit of its crest. If the sand devil struck tent or *tokal* it threw it to the ground. Next the strong wind came down on us—a parching, choking, suffocating blast of mingled hot

dry air, sand, dust and straw that was almost palpable, so full it was of particles of solid matter. The camp became a scene of confusion.

" Here one saw men holding on to the posts of a swaying hut in vain attempting to save it from destruction ; here others being dragged across the desert as they clutched the ropes of a tent that had got adrift and was scudding before the wind like an inflated balloon. Then the thunder pealed out and vivid lightnings flashed across a sky by this time covered with one great inky pall of cloud from which the great rain drops began to fall, first slowly, but soon in a noisy downpour such as I have often seen thrash the Equatorial seas. And now the camp became one huge quagmire of filthy mud, giving out a foul smell. The water, or rather liquid mire, poured through the roofs of such of our straw huts as were left standing, soaking and defiling everything within, and converting our floors into dirty pools. Every dry *khor*, or gully, became a deep rushing torrent of brown water hurrying to the Nile. The correspondents' camp was converted into a muddy island cut off from communication with the other camps by broad streams five feet in depth."

In another storm the wind, thick with sand, struck us with the force of a hurricane. No one could face the storm and breathe. It was impossible to see a yard in front of one. It became dark as on a starless night. Our huts were all blown down, there was nothing to be done but to remain where we were in the open desert, lying down with our backs to the wind, and with heads enveloped in blankets. Then came the torrents of rain, or rather mud, on us, and loud thunder and vivid lightning. The lightning, however, did not reveal our immediate surroundings, but diffused a brilliant light through the sand charged air, which appeared as a semi-opaque luminous mist. It was indeed an appalling phenomenon, and the din was fearful—a strange discord of thunder, shrieking wind, torrential rain, and the clatter of paraffin tins, cases, barrels, and other impedimenta that were driving before the gale over the stony ground. However, personal discomfort is to be expected in a campaign and is a thing of very small moment. And the storms after all had the good effect of sweeping away the plague of

foul flies, rats, scorpions and large poisonous spiders that swarmed in our huts.

But this stormy south wind blew for nearly a month, and had it endured much longer it would have brought disaster to the expeditionary force. It almost seemed as if the forces of nature were combining to hold us in check and destroy the army of those whom the Mahdists were pleased to call "the enemies of God," and that the Khalifa made no idle boast when he declared that in an inspired vision he had seen the Angels of Pestilence and numbers of the Heavenly Host fighting for the faithful against us. The telegraph had been broken down and the railway had been damaged in various places by the storm I have mentioned, so that our communication with the north was cut off for a day or two. Then a camel man came in with a letter communicating unwelcome news. The storm had washed away twelve miles of the railway near Sarras, and it would take a fortnight to repair the damage.

The section of the line that was thus washed away formed a part of the old railway constructed in 1874; our engineers found the embankment in excellent condition. It had stood firm for the previous twenty-two years, until at the most inopportune moment possible it was laid level with the desert by the deluge of August 25. The rushing waters had carried rails and sleepers seventy yards from the line, a torrent of water, one hundred yards wide and six feet deep, had suddenly swept away the whole railway camp near Sarras. On receiving this report, the Sirdar set out at once for the scene of the disaster and his presence no doubt expedited the completion of the repairs by some days, for none knew better than he how to get the most work out of men within a given time.

And this most exceptional weather was responsible for other disasters. For example the 1st Brigade, marching to Absarat, not by the Nile valley, but by a shorter route across the desert, was struck by the dreaded *haboub*, fortunately not nearly so violent as many of the storms that we had experienced, or the consequences would have been appalling. Two thousand men fell out on the march. Of one battalion only sixty came in out of seven

hundred. There were many cases of sunstroke and several deaths. The camel corps, all the mules and the officers' chargers were at once sent out to bring in the exhausted and dying men.

But to pass over this long story of misfortune—the cholera, the delayed rising of the Nile, the prevalence of the south wind and the storms—at last after much anxiety and stubborn toil on the part of all those who worked for the Sirdar, all our difficulties were overcome ; the railway was completed to Kosheh and brought up an abundance of supplies as well as the sections of the new gunboat, which was here put together and her armament was placed on board ; the Nile rose and the seven steamers passed the cataracts, arrived at Kosheh, and were moored in front of the railway station ; and the blessed north wind blew again and filled the *lateens* of the southward-bound sailing craft.

And now the cavalry, infantry and artillery, that were scattered along our line of communication, leaving small details to guard the posts, concentrated at Kosheh, and then pushed on squadron after squadron, regiment after regiment, battery after battery, to Fereig, seventy miles south of Kosheh, where we were in touch with the Dervish outposts, and whence the advance to Dongola was to begin. A fourth brigade had now been formed, so that the entire Egyptian Army, with the exception of the 16th Battalion, was to be engaged on the Dongola expedition.

Glad, indeed, were all of us who had been halting through the summer in the Nubian desert—tormented by the most trying season experienced in the memory of man—to push on again and enter upon the most interesting phase of the campaign. Those who had been prostrated by sickness recovered their health in a trice at the very prospect of it.

The correspondents up till now had organized all their transport and commissariat ; but permission was now given to us to draw forage for our horses and camels at the different military posts. We were therefore able to load our beasts and boats with all the provisions we should need for a long time to come. Having arranged everything, we set out to ride to Fereig, which we reached

in a little over two days. As we got near it we found ourselves amid cultivated fields at last. We had traversed the dismal broad frontier belt which the Dervishes had devastated and almost depopulated so as to leave a useless waste between Egypt and themselves—a belt on which no invading army could procure supplies of any description—and were entering the fertile and cultivated province of Dongola.

Instead of the desert on which not a blade of grass grew, were broad green belts of date-palms loaded with fruit, meads of long lush grass, which afforded excellent pasture for our animals, fields of maize and cotton and cucumbers, which last we eagerly devoured, for we had not tasted fresh vegetables, with the exception of the Sirdar's cauliflower, for many weeks. These were the first signs of cultivation we had seen since leaving Wady Halfa; and once more we heard the weird droning of the waterwheels that drew the water from the Nile to irrigate the crops. The natives we met cheered us up by assuring us that at Dongola we should find gardens of oranges, lemons, and pomegranates. The soldiers we passed, eager at the prospect of a fight, had forgotten all their recent hardships and killing fatigue duties, and were marching with a fine swing, singing their songs cheerily in chorus, waving their rifles and displaying a splendid enthusiasm.

As we rode on, our gunboats steamed up the Nile abreast of us, on which were embarked the men of the Staffordshire Regiment. The local population was here considerable; men, women and children in thousands watched the passing of the troops. The men clapped their hands and shouted, the women uttered the shrill luluing, which is with these people the sign of rejoicing, and even the little naked children piped their welcome to us. Fondness for children is a striking trait of the Egyptian character, and both fellahin and blacks are exceedingly kind to them. Thus while on the march the good-natured soldiers were filling up the hands of the children with the biscuits they themselves could ill spare.

On the 17th September, our whole force marched to Bargi in columns of double companies, the cavalry and horse artillery covering our front while the camel corps

marched in column on our left flank. All heavy baggage had been left behind and none but hospital tents were carried. From the time we left Fereig our cavalry was constantly in touch with the Dervishes, whose horsemen ever hovered round us. We bivouacked on the river bank and resumed our march at dawn on the 18th. This day we covered eighteen miles and during our midday halt the men of the Staffordshire Regiment disembarked and marched with us.

On Saturday, September 19, we marched at four a.m. Our hopes of a brush with the enemy were now damped by the news we heard from the inhabitants. Wad-el-Bishara, we were told, had abandoned his defences on this side of the river and had transported his entire force, guns and supplies, across the Nile in the night, and now occupied Hafir on the west bank. At six-thirty a.m. we had reached the banks of the Nile opposite Hafir, and the action began. Along the low bank of the Nile facing us extended the enemy's defensive works. A continuous line of shelter trenches ran along the river bank with loopholed mud walls so low that they afforded but a small mark to our gunners. Bishara had with him five small brass guns captured at Khartoum, and two Nordenfelt guns. On the left of the Dervish earthworks lay moored to the bank the small gunboat which Gordon had built during the seige of Khartoum, and twenty-five sailing vessels, some of forty tons burden, laden with the whole of the grain that had been brought down from Dongola. The Nile, where it separated the two forces, was between two and three thousand feet broad, and was studded with flat islands.

It was certainly a unique engagement. Our force of fifteen thousand men sat idle on the sands under the burning sun, our artillery alone coming into action, and we watched a spirited encounter between our gunboats and the enemy on the opposite bank. For an hour our guns shelled the Dervish positions. Their five guns replied and the Dervish riflemen opened fire upon us from their shelter trenches with Remingtons and Martini-Henrys, but few of their bullets reached us. At seven o'clock Commander, now Admiral, Colville, came up with three gunboats. The *Tamai* was his flagship, while

Lieutenant Beatty, now Admiral Beatty, and Captain Oldfield, R.M.A., commanded the *Abu Klea* and the *Metemmeh* respectively.

Commander Colville's orders were that he should bombard the enemy's works, cut out their sailing craft if possible, and then steam up the river to Dongola, thirty miles distant. We saw each ship in turn steam up till she was abreast of the enemy's forts and rifle pits, deliver a well directed fire at a distance of about four hundred yards from her Krupps, Nordenfeldts and Maxims, and then drop down stream again till practically out of range. These manœuvres were employed throughout the engagement. Our shore batteries co-operated by pouring their heavy fire on the Dervish position. The defenders inflicted considerable damage on the gunboats. The bullets pattered against their sides and pierced all the deck cabins and other woodwork.

One shell struck the *Abu Klea* between wind and water and entered her magazine; happily the shell did not burst, so the Dervishes were not gratified by beholding the blowing up of one of our ships. Three shells also struck the *Metemmeh*, one passing through her smoke-stack, one through her cabin, and one through the gun shield at her bow. The casualties were numerous; Commander Colville was shot through the wrist, but he continued to command his ship; Armourer-Sergeant Richardson was killed, Lieutenant Beatty was struck twice, but was very slightly wounded. The enemy's losses must have been heavy, and we saw a large body of their cavalry retire for some distance into the desert with the object of getting out of range. They were shelled by our shore batteries and lost some men before they got away. For three hours our gunboats were thus engaged, but they failed to silence our determined enemy.

At nine a.m. Colonel Parsons took two field batteries, one horse battery and the Maxim battery, with an escort of two companies of the 20th Sudanese Battalion, to the farther side of the large island of Artaghasi, where they would only have the main channel, one thousand two hundred yards wide, between them and the enemy. The Nile having already subsided considerably had left bare a swampy isthmus between the main shore and the island,

across which the guns were carried without difficulty. On riding over to this point I found our gunners busily engaged with the enemy. At this short range the fire was very effective, but though our shells knocked about their fort and mud walls a good deal, we were still unable to silence the fire of the enemy, for whose extraordinary pluck we could not but entertain the highest admiration. Their guns and riflemen opened as hot a fire upon us as ever.

One of our shells struck the Dervish steamer below the water line and she gradually heeled over and sank. At ten o'clock our guns and Maxims on the island opened a still brisker fire on the enemy, and the men of the 10th Sudanese fired occasional volleys. I saw several shells in succession strike the enemy's redoubts, which most probably dismounted the guns, for their fire was silenced for a time. And now our three gunboats steamed in line past the enemy's works, delivered their final shots under a heavy musketry fire from the Dervish entrenchments, and proceeded triumphantly up the river to reach Dongola before sunset.

Occasionally parties of Dervishes made attempts to reach their flotilla of boats with the object of carrying off their grain, but were driven off by our Maxims. Throughout the night we opened fire at intervals on the river bank in the neighbourhood of the boats, and succeeded in keeping the Dervishes off, so the whole of this large supply of grain fell into our hands on the following day.

Early the next morning we saw men shaking out the large *lateen* sails of the Dervish boats, and soon the whole flotilla got under way and sailed across to our side of the river to surrender. At the same time hundreds of people came out of the village of Hafir and lined the Nile bank, waving cloths to welcome us. It was evident that the enemy had evacuated Hafir in the night. It seems that Bishara, misled by our spies, believed that it was our intention to continue our march along the east bank so he was now marching on Dongola to oppose our passage of the river at that place.

The Dervish general must have been quite unprepared for our next move. The Sirdar gave orders that our

entire force should cross the river to Hafir with the utmost dispatch. Throughout the day and a great part of the night our gunboats and the captured Dervish vessels sailed backwards and forwards from bank to bank transporting across the broad stream our men, guns, supplies and baggage. The organization was so perfect that this large force was embarked and disembarked without any confusion. I crossed early in the day and found the villagers plucking from their clothing the dark square patches that mark the followers of the Mahdi. The women were more enthusiastic than the men; they uttered their shrill luluing, seized our hands, and would have embraced us had not their unloveliness led us to keep them somewhat aloof.

Bishara's Egyptian gunners, some of whom had formed part of Hicks Pasha's ill-fated force and others who were with Gordon at the fall of Khartoum, having hidden themselves away while Bishara was evacuating Hafir, now came over to us. Their joy at their release was affecting to behold. For twelve years they had been the cruelly treated slaves of the Khalifa; their lives were spared by the Dervishes, but they had been compelled to serve as artillerymen in the Khalifa's army.

Our force made a short march in the evening of September 21st, and another one on September 22nd. On the 23rd we made our final march, which brought us to Dongola. Our spies informed us that Wad-el-Bishara had held a council of war with his chief Emirs, at which it was decided to offer a determined resistance, and to pursue the old Mahdist tactics of hurling the Baggara horsemen on our advancing infantry in a series of the well-known desperate Dervish charges. Our force now numbering fifteen thousand men marched across the desert in columns of route, and on our left our steamers, abreast of us, forced their way against the strong current of the mile and a half broad river. Shortly after daybreak the force deployed and got into battle formation. The mounted Dervishes who hovered round our advance and occasionally exchanged shots with our cavalry, must have been impressed by the sight and recognized the futility of offering serious resistance with the seven thousand men who composed the garrison of Dongola.

As we marched we heard the sound of guns in front and knew that the Dervishes in Dongola were engaged with our gunboats. At seven o'clock we perceived a large body of Dervish horsemen—the Baggara and Jaalin warriors—who had come out to meet us. We expected the Dervish charge but they seemed to think better of it and retired to another position. Sometimes they appeared to be advancing upon us, and sometimes to be retiring. Sometimes they stood steadily until we were less than a mile off. They had evidently become divided in their councils, and we learnt afterwards that the Emirs, beholding the magnitude of our army, refused to charge when ordered to do so by Wad-el-Bishara. Our troops marched at a brisk rate, but could not get into touch with the cautious enemy that ever retreated before us, though occasionally drawing themselves up again in battle array as if they considered that the time had come to make the attack.

At last we were nearly abreast of the town, and our line swung round from the right to surround the enemy's position, when we heard the shrill joyous cry of welcome raised by a multitude of women, and to our surprise saw waving over the old Mudirieh, formerly the Government buildings, not the Mahdist banners but the flag of Egypt. It was evident that the black riflemen, who formed the bulk of the garrison, had surrendered. And now our cavalry, camel corps, and horse artillery started in pursuit of the mounted Baggara and Jaalin who had come out to meet our force, but who were now in full retreat across the desert.

At eleven o'clock we reached the river bank at the southern end of the city of Dongola. The inhabitants crowded round us raising acclamations of delight, seizing and kissing our hands as we passed, carrying bowls of water to our thirsty troops, displaying in every way their gratitude to those who had delivered them from the crushing tyranny of the Baggara. And now we heard how our gunboats had brought about the surrender of the black garrison. Five gunboats in all, for others had now come up, from the early morning had opened fire on the strong Dervish defence on the river bank and had driven the enemy out of their principal fort with shrapnel.

The twelve-pounders on the new boat, the *Zafr*, made very good practice at a range of four miles on the retiring Baggara in the desert.

At half past nine the black garrison of the Mudirieh hoisted the white flag. These black riflemen, though ready to fight well under any master, cared nothing for Mahdism, and were quite ready, now that they saw the Baggara and Jaalin in full retreat, to surrender to us and to enlist at once in the black battalions of the Khedive, whom they had been fighting five minutes before, and in whose ranks they had so many relations and friends. When the white flag was hoisted Commander Colville, with other officers, a hundred Sudanese and Egyptian soldiers from the *Tamai* and a few British marines, landed from their ships to receive the submission of the black infantry. They pulled down the Mahdi banners and hoisted the Egyptian flag on the Mudirieh. Here the Jaalin Emir Hassan Wad-el-Nejubi came up and handed his sword to Commander Colville.

The pursuit of the enemy by our cavalry camel corps and horse artillery, produced an important result. They pressed the Baggara horsemen so closely that the latter were compelled to leave behind them on their line of flight across the desert the greater portion of the black infantry whom they were driving before them. Throughout the night these blacks with their wives and families, having escaped from the Baggara, were pouring into the town to surrender to the Sirdar. Of these there were more than sufficient to form another Sudanese battalion.

We found the once prosperous city of Dongola in ruins, not a house remained whole ; every building had been gutted ; where once were crowded streets, the palms now rose above the wrecked habitations, and every thoroughfare was choked with a dense undergrowth of thorny bushes and tall rank grass. The great bazaar, with its covered arcades, one of the chief marts of Africa, was now a heap of rubble. Of the public buildings and the handsome mansions of the merchants, the red brick walls, with gracefully arched doors and windows alone remained standing, while within them one could still see traces of columned corridors and delicate eastern ornamentation.

Where once extended busy riverside quays, swampy ground now sloped to the Nile ; the pleasant gardens of fruit trees and flowers had been destroyed. For twelve years Dongola had been uninhabited, for the Baggara declared it to be—as the city of the unbelieving Turks—an accursed place in which no man should be permitted to dwell. Having left the city empty for so many years, the Dervishes prepared to oppose our advance by fortifying the ruins of Dongola, and exceedingly well they had done this.

At last, despite the innumerable difficulties, the Dongola expedition had been triumphantly accomplished. The entire province of Dongola as far as el Debbeh had been occupied by the Egyptian troops and throughout the five hundred miles of the Nile valley that had thus been recovered the population freed from Dervish oppression was friendly to the Government. As soon as it became known that there would be no further advance that year, there commenced an exodus of the special service officers and the correspondents of newspapers. We sold our horses, camels and boats, bade farewell to our many friends in the Egyptian Army, with the hope that we should meet again in the near future on the road to Omdurman, and by divers ways returned to England for the winter. There could be no further advance of the Egyptian Army until the following summer, when the Nile would rise again and allow of its navigation by our steamers. In the meanwhile the construction of the desert railways was being pushed ahead and all preparations were being made for the next move.

CHAPTER XX

The Turko-Greek war.—Invasion of Albania.—The campaign in Epirus.—Arta.—The war opens.—The Turks retire.—The Pentipegadia Pass.—Turkish attack on the pass.—Retreat of the Greek army.—The Euzonoi.—Back to Arta.

SO for the correspondents several months would elapse before it would be time for them to return to the Sudan. But I was not kept idle, for the Turkish-Greek war of 1897 was about to break out, and *The Times* despatched me to Greece to accompany the Greek armies in the field. It was foreseen that the campaign would soon be over, and that I should be back in England in good time to join the expeditionary force in the Sudan before hostilities commenced. The Turkish-Greek war aroused little interest in England, save among sundry sentimentalists, whose sympathies were with Greece, and bands of working men who noisily paraded the streets of London shoving their collecting boxes under everybody's nose as they ostensibly gathered funds to help the cause of the Greeks and their allies, the Garibaldian volunteers.

The Greek people were the aggressors in this conflict, and they hoped to wage war with Turkey on the heads I win tails you lose principle. For they were led to believe that England would come to their assistance, in which case Greece was certain to gain large accessions of territory at the termination of the war. On the other hand, should England fail to assist them and should they therefore be defeated, Europe would not permit a victorious Turkey to overrun Christian Greece or annex any of her territory. Therefore, whatever happened, they had little to lose and perhaps much to gain. All the Greeks with whom I conversed explained the situation to me in words to the above effect.

Two campaigns were to be prosecuted simultaneously, one in the East, in Thessaly, where the Greek forces were to be under the command of the Crown Prince, and one in the West, in Epirus, where a force under Colonel Manos hoped to invade Albania. I was to be attached to the latter army, and so travelled to Patras, via Corfu.

At Patras, which I found in a very excited state and full of orators who declaimed loudly in the market places and streets and from hotel windows—not a preacher of pacifism among them—I purchased a horse and engaged a Greek as servant. By train and country boat we reached Agrinion, passing by historic Missolonghi on the way, and thence rode to Arta, the frontier town at which Colonel Manos's force was concentrated.

Arta is situated on the left bank of the river Arachthos—the Achelous of the ancients—which here forms the frontier between Greece and Turkey. It flows into the Gulf of Arta about fifteen miles away. On the heights behind the town is a large fort, formerly erected by the Turks, and by this were the powerful batteries of the Greeks, between which and the Turkish batteries, three thousand yards off, on a ridge beyond the river, the expected artillery duel would be fought. Colonel Manos had under him a force of about twelve thousand men, and the Turkish force beyond the river was of about the same strength. Well constructed trenches and breastworks lined both sides of the river, from which the Turk and Greek sharpshooters faced each other, about one hundred yards apart, awaiting the order to begin.

At Arta I found Scudamore, who had arranged matters very satisfactorily with the Greek headquarters. There was to be no censorship. The English correspondents—there were only the two of us—had liberty to go where we liked. We were allowed to use the military telegraph for the despatch of messages to our respective papers.

There was an old, very narrow, Venetian stone bridge that crossed the river at Arta ; it sloped steeply from the centre towards either shore, and under its arches the Arachthos raged furiously on its descent to the sea. The bridge ends were strongly defended by Greek and Turkish posts. Scudamore had established friendly relations with the Turkish colonel, who commanded the post at the farther end of the bridge. Each day, as we awaited the outbreak of hostilities, we used to cross the bridge to the Turkish post and chat and take coffee with the courteous Turkish officers.

Daily the Colonel used to say to us, " When is the war going to begin ? My orders are to await the Greek attack.

Why don't they come on?" At last one day he said, "I think you had better not come here again unless you like to join us as correspondents, and you will be very welcome. They have already started fighting in Thessaly, and it is time we began here. I shall have to begin if they don't."

On our return to the Greek camp we found that the Demarchos of the town had distributed rifles among the able-bodied townsmen, and had ordered the remaining inhabitants to leave the town, so the roads were crowded with carts full of old men, women and children carrying their property with them and hurrying to the villages in the south beyond the range of the Turkish batteries.

The following day, April 18, Scudamore and myself went up to the Greek batteries under the fort, and while we were there an officer rode up with orders that fire should be opened on the enemy. At three p.m. our eight seven-inch guns opened fire, and immediately there broke out a tremendous uproar all down the valley of the Arachthos. All the Greek batteries were in action, as were the Krupp guns of the Turks. The Turk and Greek riflemen who lined the trenches on either side of the river were firing briskly at each other. Greek batteries at Cape Penagia, fifteen miles from Arta, and the Greek warships in the Gulf of Arta, were engaged with the opposite Turkish positions. It was a most dramatic opening of a war. The noise was tremendous; there was a great expenditure of ammunition, but I do not think that much damage was inflicted by either side. The Turkish shell fell pretty thickly and several struck the fort, but many of them—the Turks had bought their ammunition in Germany—failed to burst. One of the Greek batteries was put out of action. The Greek fire was well directed, and the shells were frequently dropping in the Turkish batteries.

This artillery duel lasted for three days. At five p.m. on the 19th, Turkish infantry attempted to cross the bridge, but were repulsed by the Greeks. The Turkish guns covered the attack. At four o'clock the next morning I was awakened by heavy firing at the Arta bridge. Descending thither I found five hundred Turks gallantly attempting to force a passage under a heavy covering

fire from their guns and sharpshooters. They were repulsed, losing their leader, killed, and suffering many casualties. I afterwards visited the trenches lining the river. The Greeks after their long, fatiguing and anxious work, were in excellent spirits. There were some English volunteers—one a well-known novelist—and some Italian Garibaldians among them.

That night at twelve o'clock, the Turks made yet another attempt to force the passage of the bridge; they concentrated their musketry fire on the Greek bridge post, and enfiladed the Greek trenches with artillery brought into position higher up the river. But they were repulsed by stubborn fighting on the part of the Greeks in less than an hour.

Information had reached Arta, and was apparently believed by all, to the effect that England had declared war on Turkey, and was sending a large force to the assistance of the Greeks. The affection of the poor, deluded people for Scudamore and myself, became embarrassing. In vain we told them that they would be roughly disillusioned if they put credence in these reports They often spoke of the memorandum that had been sent to Greece by one hundred British Members of Parliament. We were obliged to explain to them that England had no intention of coming to the assistance of Greece, and that the hundred Members of Parliament only represented themselves, and were the last people in the world to risk their skins near the front.

For three days the artillery duel had continued, and the Turks and Greek infantry that lined the riverside trenches had been exchanging a brisk fire, and had also opened fire on any of the enemy that exposed himself. Indeed on the Greek side of the river one was ever under fire as one moved about—under shell fire as one mounted the steep down that led to the fort, and under the fire of the enemy's sharpshooters wherever one went. The fort in which we messed and slept was a target for the Turkish artillery, and was well peppered. On one occasion, a shell pierced the wall and burst in the little mess room that had been provided for us.

And now an extraordinary thing happened. After the determined attack on the bridge by the Turks, at mid-

night, April 20, the firing entirely ceased and we enjoyed a quiet night. At dawn the next day as we looked out on the Turkish positions and the open country around them, we saw no signs of the enemy. They had disappeared ; but we could see that the towns of Filippiada and Strivina to the west of Arta, in Turkish territory, were in flames. The Greek soldiers, of course, jumped to the conclusion that they had gained a great victory, and that the Turks had abandoned their positions and were in full flight to Janina. According to the peasants the Turks had been fighting among themselves on the previous day. The officers and braver men in vain attempted to check the panic-struck flight, and the officers, in despair, at last broke their swords across their knees.

Scudamore and myself were unable to give credit to this story. It seemed impossible that a force of Turkish regulars should bolt in this fashion, after a bombardment by a few guns. Later on a little of the truth leaked out, but it was not until several years later that I heard the other side of the story. I was in Salonika shortly after the Turkish revolution, and called on the commandant at the fort. He proved to be an artillery officer who had served in the Greek war, and had taken part in the artillery duel at Arta. We had an interesting conversation. He asked me whether many of the Turkish shell had burst. On my telling him that most of them were faulty he laughed and said :

" I knew it. They were bought from the Germans."

I asked him why the Turks had abandoned their positions before Arta.

" We were suddenly ordered back to Janina to suppress a revolt that had broken out there. We put down the rising, left a garrison there, and then came back to deal with the Greeks at Arta."

But the Greeks seemed to think that their prowess had won the war. They were drunk with patriotic enthusiasm. At about eleven in the morning, their scouts having brought word that the Turks were far away on the road to Janina, their troops began to cross the river into Turkish territory. First came a regiment of infantry, the men shouting and singing, and garlanded with flowers ;

these were followed by mule batteries and more troops. The population of all that part of Turkey is of Greek blood and of the Greek religion; so the peasants all came out to joyfully fraternize with the troops, whom they regarded as their liberators. The Greek officers delivered impassioned addresses to the people, telling them that they were now freed and that the Greeks would never retire or yield one inch of this territory they had conquered. In the afternoon I rode to Filippiada, which is ten miles from Arta. Here the peasantry, rejoicing in their new liberty, were energetically pillaging the houses of the rich Turks. I caught several of them carrying away our own baggage, and it was only by threatening them with our revolvers that we recovered our belongings from the robbers. The Greek forces from Arta and other posts were concentrating here, and an immediate advance on Janina was decided on.

But the next morning, April 23, the Greeks suffered a reverse that put a stop to their rejoicing, and we noticed that all the officers and men whom we met wore very glum faces. The road from Arta to Janina crosses a range of mountains about fifteen miles from Arta. There is a shallow gap in the mountain through which the road passes, the pass of Pentipegadia, or "the five wells." The approach to this gap is gradual, but on the further side the mountains slope steeply to the plain. This pass is indeed the key to Janina.

In the night of April 22 the Greeks had sent a battalion to occupy this important position, and they were holding the further outlet of the pass when, at dawn on the 23rd, they were suddenly attacked by a superior force of the enemy. The Greeks, worn out, and with no food or water, fought on until the evening, losing about one hundred and fifty killed and wounded. The supports which they had expected did not come up. Their ammunition being exhausted, they were compelled to retire. I met them on the road; their cartridge belts were empty and they were tired out.

On the morning of the 24th, two infantry battalions, one battalion of Euzonoi (kilted troops) and a mountain battery reoccupied the pass, which had been abandoned by the Turks. As this pass was the likely spot for any

future fighting, Scudamore and myself decided to ride to it, bivouac with the outposts, and await developments.

We took with us a small tent, our blankets, and a good supply of provisions. We noticed on our way that the Greeks had about eight thousand men distributed between Arta and the mouth of the pass. These posts were in positions of great strength; one under the command of Colonel Bozzaris had four thousand men and eighteen guns; at another post were three thousand men and six guns; at another one thousand and six hundred men and four guns. When we came to the last of these posts, on a plateau to the right of the road, we pitched our tent, left it and most of our supplies in the charge of an old Turkish servant whom Scudamore had engaged, and taking little more than our blankets with us, rode up to the outpost at the further end of the pass.

Here, as I have explained, the road passes through a gap in the mountains, and on either side of it are steep heights which were held by the Greeks. A magnificent view is commanded from here. Due north of us, a few miles off, towering above the lesser heights, we saw the great snow-streaked bare peak which dominates Janina, and far below us was the plain and the winding white road that leads to that town.

We found Greek troops, the bulk of whom were Euzonoi, entrenched on the height to the left of the pass. It was a wind-swept spot and fully exposed to the heavy showers that fell occasionally. We lived on this hillside for several days, and found the tough Euzonoi capital fellows to get on with. These kilted men were all mountaineers who had seen much fighting, for they had in their time formed part of the irregular bands in Macedonia, and some probably were ex-brigands. Scudamore and myself took it in turns to ride down to Arta with our despatches, which were thence sent by messenger to the English cable office at Patras—for we could place no reliance on the military telegraph.

We found to our astonishment that practically no communication was kept up between headquarters and the various posts. When either of us reached Arta he had to go to headquarters and give information as to what was happening at Pentipegadia, for they knew very

little. And all the while the Greeks and Turks at the end of the pass were exchanging artillery and infantry fire. On the 28th the Turks made a great effort to recover their lost positions. Covered by a heavy artillery fire the Turkish infantry—estimated to number four thousand—swarmed up the heights and all but captured them, but were repulsed with heavy losses by the Greek infantry, Euzonoi and volunteers. The latter were inhabitants of the Turkish territory which the Greeks had occupied. These had been armed by the Greeks, and volunteered eagerly, as did the villagers who had escaped through the Turkish lines, to join the Greek ranks.

This determined attack of four thousand Turks on the position should have shown the Greeks the urgent need of strongly reinforcing this, the key of Janina, but the commander, repeating the mistake which caused the disaster of Pentipegadia on April 23, left this vital position to be held by a handful of men who were unsupported. It was the object of the Greeks to hold this pass until the fall of Preveza, near the mouth of the Arachthos, should liberate the troops that had been sent to the investment of that place, when an attack in force would be made on the Turkish positions beyond the pass, while another force, Euzonoi for the most part, would cross the mountains and fall on the Turkish flank. This plan, if carried out, might have proved successful and would have opened the road to Janina to the victorious Greeks.

But as it turned out, one vital defect of the organization of the Epirus force led to total collapse so soon as a test was applied. The plan of attack was excellent, but the arrangements for defence should the enemy be pleased to act on the offensive, were altogether inadequate. There was a lack of cohesion. The force which, after the bombardment of Arta, crossed the Arachthos and occupied a considerable portion of Turkish Epirus, appeared to be composed of a number of scattered units having little connection with one another. Each post on the important Pentipegadia Pass, for example, was apparently supposed to be able to hold its own in all circumstances without needing supports ; the officer in command of each apparently knew nothing of what was being done

beyond his own post, and rarely received instructions from headquarters.

In the morning of April 29, the entrance of the pass was held by about one thousand one hundred men, that is, two guns and six hundred Euzonoi on the height to the left of the Janina road, and two hill guns, two hundred Euzonoi, one company of infantry and about two hundred volunteers on the mountain to the right of the road, all the men being worn out, having been lying out for six days on the mountain side in bitter cold by night and scorching sun by day, with scant rations, engaged in constant outpost duty and fighting daily from dawn to sunset. I remained all the morning with the Euzonoi on the left of the Greek position. Intermittent firing was exchanged by the Greek and Turkish artillery and infantry, and on the plain beneath us columns of smoke showed where the Turks were burning the peasants' houses, no doubt in revenge on the inhabitants for having espoused the cause of the Greeks.

At noon we could discern a large body of Turks on the plain below moving in the direction of the pass, and shortly after four p.m. a tremendous fusillade broke out on our right and told us that the Turks in force were attempting to scale the mountain beyond the road and storm that commanding position. A vigorous and well directed artillery fire on both Greek posts supported the attack. I realized that so fierce an assault on the handful of Greeks might drive them out, but not that this one blow would throw all the Epirus army into a temporary condition of hopeless panic, and lose for Greece in one afternoon all the positions gained since the opening of the campaign.

The Turks, without intermission till five p.m., kept up a fire on the Greek mountain position. Availing themselves of the cover afforded by bushes and rocks, the Turks gradually scaled the mountain. The firing was rapid and continuous, and the roar of musketry grew louder as the enemy approached. At this time, to my astonishment, the two guns that were with us on the left were limbered up and taken down the road, and the Euzonoi alone were left. Shortly after five p.m. the Greek fire on our right ceased. We saw the defenders of

that position stream down the slopes and into the valley in flight. Then the Turks, loudly cheering, appeared swarming on the summit ; the mountain had been taken. Our position on the left now became untenable ; for the enemy from their captured height began to pour a most destructive rifle fire on us, while Turks who had swarmed up the heights beneath us were attacking our front.

So at five-fifteen p.m., the order was given to retire. Scudamore and myself accompanied the six hundred Euzonoi as the saddened men slowly retreated, not following the road by which we had come as that was exposed to the fire of the enemy, but taking the rough tracks and sheep paths under the cover of the ridge. The Euzonoi did not retire hurriedly, but walked off down the pass slowly, with angry looks and in silence, showing no symptoms of panic. They halted now and again in an advantageous position to fire volleys into the masses of pursuing Turks. Some of the youngsters, over fatigued, with nerves unstrung by the excitement of five days' constant fighting, fell into a sort of hysterical fury, turned to charge desperately into the enemy's midst and struggled with their companions who attempted to restrain them. The Turks soon abandoned the pursuit and confined their attention to the scattered farmhouses, which they looted and burnt.

So far as I could see, the Greeks engaged in this fight at the outposts behaved well. The handful thus left unsupported could not have withstood that fearful fusillade, but the good conduct of the Euzonoi makes the subsequent behaviour of the rest of the army, who were never under fire, all the more inexplicable ; and why the guns were taken out of action as soon as the Turks attacked, none could explain. When we had ridden some miles down the pass we left our Euzonoi friends and rode across the ridge to our left, so as to regain the road, and the camp beyond, where we had left our tent and our baggage under the care of the old Turkish servant. That the men driven from the advanced post would rally at this strong position, which was held by one thousand men and eight guns, we had taken for granted, but, on reaching the heights we were amazed to find the men, guns and baggage had all gone.

Our stolid old Turk with a broad grin on his face, standing beside our pitched tent and scattered belongings, while our baggage mule grazed peacefully on the thyme-scented pasture, was the only human being in sight. He had lit a fire and had made himself some coffee. We asked him what had become of the Greeks. He pointed down the pass, " They went like rats escaping from a burning house," he said.

Some straggling Turks approached us and fired volleys at us while we were loading up our mules with our belongings. But they did not follow us when we proceeded down the pass, doubtless fearing that some ambush had been prepared for them. At nine p.m. we reached the post at Kumuzades and there found that the three thousand men who had held this strong position had all left to swell this extraordinary rout, taking their six guns with them ; not a soldier did we find there. It was an amazing collapse of an army, and we could make nothing of it. A little way up a side glen there stood a village and in a house outside it we had left some of our spare baggage on our way up from Arta ; so we turned up the glen and found our friends in the house in great distress.

They asked our advice as to what they should do. Now as we were descending the road we had seen behind us house after house burning, some not two miles distant, so we knew that the Turks were close on our heels. To remain in this village up the glen was to be caught in a trap so we recommended the poor people to pack up their more valuable possessions without delay and travel through the night to Arta. We promised to wait for them until they were quite ready to start, and to accompany them down the pass, which seemed greatly to reassure them : and we placed our two horses at the disposal of the women to carry themselves and their goods. With tears and wailings the women collected their valuables into large bundles, grieving over the home which they knew would soon be in flames and all that they had to abandon. One young girl who was to have been married within a few weeks was disconsolate because much of her trousseau had to be left behind ; and the little children when taken out of bed were distracted with

terror, realizing the situation, for they learn when young on this frontier to dread the Turkish soldiery.

At last the lights were turned out in the house, the door was locked, and our melancholy procession started down the glen—old men and women, young girls and boys, and little children—all who were strong enough laden with big bundles. We were joined on our way by other families from the village and we numbered some sixty souls in all. The night was very dark and the mountain track was rough and precipitous, so that we could progress but slowly. Men holding lanterns and candles (for there was not a breath of wind to extinguish them) were scattered along our long line to show the way. It was quite possible—as only Scudamore and myself who had seen the blazing houses at such a short distance up the pass, fully realized—that we might find the Turks at the mouth of the glen by the time we got there, so we listened keenly for any sound. But we were greatly relieved on emerging from the glen on to the road to find that not a human being was there, friend or foe. The retiring troops were ahead of us, the Turks not far behind, and, as we remarked at the time, we might consider ourselves the rearguard of the retreating Greek Army.

And now once again we saw the red glare of the blazing homesteads, not only behind us, but also on our right as we descended the pass ; for the pursuers had reached Filippiada, which unfortunate town had again changed hands, and what remained of it was now in flames. It was about midnight when we and our mournful procession of villagers overtook the scattered, utterly disorganized retreating troops, and we observed with wonder the strange form this reasonless panic had assumed. The packed mass of men of all arms were silently, stolidly tumbling on through the darkness. There was no haste in this disorderly retreat, no excitement, no terror, merely a curious apathetic disinclination to make a stand anywhere or to obey their officers ; a dogged determination not to face the enemy.

In a sluggish but irresistible wave they flowed on towards Arta. These men, without firing a shot, without even seeing the enemy, had abandoned position after

position of vital importance to Greece. Neither of us two had ever seen anything like this before, and it was not pleasant to contemplate, the more so because we knew that these same men could fight when they willed; but how or why this whole army crumpled up then without reason I understand no better than I did at that time. The men tramped on, heedless of discipline, silent and sullen, all arms and regiments mixed up together in hopeless confusion; the officers, helpless for the time to restore any order, also walked on in silent dejection and shame, with bowed heads.

At one o'clock in the morning we reached the fourth and most formidable of the four posts which guarded the Arta—Pentipegadia road. Here, a few hours earlier, had been stationed a force of about five thousand men, infantry and cavalry, with eighteen guns. Here, indeed, we found a large body, or rather mob, of soldiers of all arms, whose further rout had been checked for a time by the officers. The disorderly mass of thousands of soldiers was halting in hesitating fashion. We waited for awhile and watched. It seemed at first as if military discipline would prevail and the men fell in when ordered, but not for long, for first individually and then in larger and larger groups, they drifted off again towards Arta, and so the whole army rolled away to the south in a sullen stream as before.

From this point we slowly picked our way through a dense crowd of soldiers and fugitive villagers who observed an appalling silence, save occasionally for the cry of a mother, who had lost her child or a child seeking for its mother. We adopted several small lost children, looked after them and handed them over to their grateful mothers when we found them on the following day. The scared villagers on all the line of retreat were fleeing from the Turkish vengeance. There were many thousands of them, men, women and children with their property in great bundles on their backs, staggering along the road.

There was a perpetual din in our ears of the thousands of bleating sheep and goats and lowing cattle that were being driven before them by the peasantry. The narrow road in places was packed by a rolling mass of terror-maddened animals, leaping over each other and trampling

on and killing each other. Many fell over the precipices that bordered the road and were dashed to pieces. The same fate must have befallen a number of the panic-struck peasants. A few lanterns carried by some cast a feeble light here and there on the weird and painful scene; and as we slowly drifted on both behind us and to the right of us ever blazed out fresh tongues of fire, reddening the clouds above to show us that the Turks were still pushing on and destroying the homesteads of the Christians.

We had for some time been separated from the inhabitants of the farmhouse, but suddenly we recognized our two horses, which we had placed at the disposal of the women. But now the women had disappeared, and two of their lazy male relations—both young men—were riding the horses. We promptly compelled them to dismount, and placed our adopted children on them.

We reached Arta bridge at two-thirty a.m. Here there was a tremendous block; infantry, artillery, cavalry, fugitive peasantry, wagons, baggage animals, were all attempting together to pass over the narrow roadway of the old bridge. We stayed a few hours by the riverside until the crowd was less dense and then we crossed the bridge into Arta.

It was here that we ascertained that not only the men who held the positions on the pass, but also the entire Greek force beyond the river, the garrisons of Filippiada and other posts, the troops who had been attacking Preveza, had been ordered to abandon their positions and were streaming into Arta, nearly twenty thousand men in all, including the volunteers, with forty guns, carrying blind panic with them, so that the civilian population of Arta made yet another hurried flight, this time the frightened people travelling much farther south than they had done on the previous occasion, before they considered that they were at a safe distance from the Turks. All that night the troops poured across the bridge, and by eight in the morning there was not a Greek soldier on the right bank of the Arachthos. Had the Turks followed up their victory there would have been a fearful slaughter of the Greeks.

CHAPTER XXI

Hysterical Patras.—Inaction of the Greeks.—Second invasion of Turkey.—The action at Imaret heights.—Gallantry of Greek troops.—Greeks withdrawn.—Was Athens to blame?

FINDING that no reliable messengers could be got to go to Patras, Scudamore and myself decided to travel there as fast as possible, write and send off our cablegrams, and then return to the front. So we set out that morning—April 30—rode our tired horses down to Agrinion, eighty miles from the scene of the fight, and then by small sailing boat and train, proceeded to Patras.

We reached Patras on May 2, and found the population of the town in an extraordinary state of ferment. The people were violently excited and wandered about day and night—for they apparently never went to bed—through the streets and squares, running together to cheer each new batch of volunteers, native or foreign, that arrived by steamer or train, or collecting in groups to angrily discuss the situation, seeking to find a scapegoat, vituperating the King, the Government, the generals, and throwing the blame for Greece's disaster on everyone save themselves, who had shrieked for war and compelled the Government to engage in it.

The people were in a dangerous mood. In the churches here on the preceding Sunday the congregations had risen and loudly protested when the priests delivered the usual prayer for the Royal Family; the King's residence in this neighbourhood had been pillaged by the peasantry; and a few days before a great crowd of peasants had entered the town, had broken into the gunsmiths' shops, had seized some cases of rifles that had just been landed on the quay from a Messagerie steamer, and had armed themselves. The town, practically unguarded by police, was full of armed civilians, workmen and others, who amused themselves by firing off their rifles and revolvers in the streets; many of the foreign volunteers who swaggered about the streets were confessedly revolutionaries of an advanced type. Foreigners residing in Patras were much reassured by the presence of two gunboats in the harbour, one (the *Hebe*) flying the British flag, the other the Italian.

That night Scudamore and I sat in a room together and wrote our dispatches. We were tired out after our strenuous life of the last few days, and could scarcely keep our eyes open. We sat opposite each other at a small table. As arranged between us, whenever one of us dozed off the other kicked him on the shins and woke him. The next morning we set out to travel as fast as we could back to the front. It was pleasant to get away from noisy and hysterical Patras to the comparative peacefulness of the outposts. We found our horses at Agrinion and rode on to Arta. On the road we met thousands of regulars, reservists and volunteers proceeding to the front. All were enthusiastic and keen on retrieving the Greek disaster.

At Arta I found that no movements of troops had taken place in our absence. The soldiers were discontented, dejected and angry. They asked why they were not led against the enemy, who were in but small force, and could be seen across the river insulting the Greeks by burning Christian villages. On the previous day, for example, a large village was blazing not two miles off, while nearly twenty thousand Greek troops and volunteeers on this side of the river, holding the same positions as they occupied at the outbreak of the war, remained inactive.

Arta was crowded with troops and refugees. The shops were closed. The town was in a disgusting condition, and was becoming very unhealthy ; typhoid and dysentery had broken out and a serious epidemic was probable. The inaction of the Greeks was inexplicable, for a dash on Janina would have succeeded ten days back, and even now there would be a good chance of success, for the Greeks had been heavily reinforced. Preveza might have been taken long before this, but no troops had been sent to assist the fleet, and gunboats alone, with no men to land, can effect nothing by a mere bombardment. Whoever was to blame, the results were disastrous. The retirement to this side of the river after the Pentipegadia rout had utterly ruined the Christian peasantry on the other side, who, encouraged by the early Greek success and occupation of the country, and armed by the Greeks, had joined the invaders, only to be left in the lurch when the Greeks retired across the frontier without striking a blow. Thousands of men were

still pouring in, at first sanguine, eager to be sent out to attack the enemy, but soon to swell the discontented army, kept idle in pestilential Arta and the surrounding country. The opinion was that the inaction was in pursuance of orders from Athens, and the indignation of the troops, believing this, became excessive.

After serious blunders and subsequent inaction, which permitted the Turks to recover all their positions, to bring up reinforcements and guns, and to erect strong defensive works, the Greeks at last decided to throw the whole Epirus army across the frontier and make a bold stroke to recover the Pentipegadia Pass and the road to Janina.

In the evening of May 12, a force of eight thousand men—infantry and cavalry and twelve guns—crossed Arta bridge, and after a slight skirmish occupied the Imaret heights, near Arta. Here I bivouacked with the troops. Two brigades crossed the river on the following day to co-operate with us by falling on the Turkish flanks ; but it is unnecessary here to describe in detail the Greek plan of attack. The Turks held in front of us the range across which, by way of the Pentipegadia Pass, the road to Janina is carried. Their positions were exceedingly strong, and they were provided with plenty of guns, most of them of ten centimetres. The Greek infantry crossing the Imaret heights advanced very steadily up the valley, exposed to a heavy fire from the mountain above and a flanking fire on the right and left, while both Turkish and Greek artillery were busily engaged.

The enemy's main position, a steep grassy down, fifteen hundred feet above the plain, had to be captured before the Greeks could push into the Pentipegadia Pass. The Greeks swarmed gallantly in skirmishing order up this height, opening a fierce fire on the Turkish entrenchments above. But it was not till five p.m. that two thousand Greeks reached a shoulder of this mountain, but a little lower than the summit, divided from it by a broad hollow. The Turks holding this shoulder retired as the Greeks approached. The Greeks, now extended along the shoulder in a long line, and protected by it, opened a terrific fire on the Turks on the summit, who replied just as fiercely from their entrenchments. The Greek casualties were heavy.

When the darkness set in, fire ceased on both sides. I bivouacked on the shoulder of the mountain with the Greeks, who were strongly reinforced in the night. The Greeks this day distinguished themselves, displaying coolness under a very hot fire, and proved that, when well led on a properly and boldly conducted enterprise, they are excellent troops. Now that the indecision and inaction of the recent policy was over and that they were face to face with the enemy in battle, all their dejection had gone, and a fine spirit and enthusiasm were displayed.

The following day the action continued. Both Greeks and Turks had brought up reinforcements. On the plain that stretched to Arta, large bodies of the enemy opposed the advancing Greeks, but were driven slowly back. At nine in the morning all the Turkish positions on the heights were being fiercely attacked. The principal Turkish position was the grassy height which I have described as commanding the entrance to the Pentipegadia Pass. The Greeks who had bivouacked on the shoulder of this height descended the intervening hollow and began to scale the steep slopes on the further side. The Turks, sheltered by five long lines of entrenchments on the mountain side made a stubborn resistance opening a fierce fire on the Greeks each time that an assault was attempted, and succeeded in checking what had up till then been a steady advance of the whole army.

While assaulting this position the Greeks lost seven hundred men killed and wounded, but ever returned readily with cheers to the assault, displaying great courage, and would probably, though after heavy loss, have stormed this most difficult position had they not lost so many officers. The chief weakness of the Greek Army was the insufficient proportion of officers to men. So in this action there were several companies left without officers. An order was given to the weakened regiments to retire, which they did in good order, taking up their positions as before under cover of the ridge of the mountain's shoulder. The Greek attack on our left across the plain had, as we could see from the shoulder of the mountain, also come to a stop.

At five in the evening, the action ceased, and we prepared to bivouac again on the rain-swept hillside, for

it rained steadily throughout the night. But soon after dark, to our amazement, orders were given to withdraw the troops from their advanced positions, won at such heavy cost. The mountain shoulder was abandoned for a much lower ridge half a mile away, while the troops on the plain on our left and in the valley on our right were also withdrawn to a considerable distance. It was explained to me that this was done in order to concentrate the troops in a safer position, but as will be seen the so-called concentration did not stop there. We were not disturbed in the night ; but on the following morning we found that the Turks had entrenched themselves in an advantageous position on the shoulder which the Greeks had abandoned. The Greeks shelled them from the ridge and from Arta fort, but failed to drive them out. Throughout the day the artillery on both sides was engaged, but there were no movements of troops, and only occasional firing occurred between the outposts.

Shortly before midnight, to the amazement of all, came the order that the entire Greek force should be withdrawn across the river to occupy their original positions in Greek territory. No one could assign a reason for this step which, like so many other proceedings in this war, was calculated to demoralize and dispirit the troops. The orders, so far as I could make out, came from Athens. So all the troops recrossed the Arachthos at various points, not without certain mishaps. Thus the volunteers and irregulars who were holding the Turks at Preveza, while they were retiring according to orders, were attacked by the Turks, who converted the retirement into a rout and killed three hundred of them.

As hostilities seemed now to have ceased for good, Scudamore and myself rode down to Agrinion on the following day. It was still raining heavily. The country was overrun by armed irregulars under no leadership. From Agrinion we travelled to Patras and so home to London. Of this campaign I have written only what I saw with my own eyes and can give no explanation of the strange things that happened. That the Greeks have fought well in their subsequent wars is certain ; but what was the matter with them in 1897 ? And one may add, what is the matter with them in 1922, as I write this ?

CHAPTER XXII

Andrée's balloon-steering apparatus.—An experimental cruise with the apparatus.—Theory of the invention.—Partial success.—Foul of a railway train.

ON returning to London I found that some time must still elapse before my presence would be required in the Sudan; so in addition to doing other journalistic work—for example, the description of the ceremonies and festivities connected with the Diamond Jubilee of Queen Victoria and her triumphal procession to St. Paul's Cathedral—I undertook to be for the nonce the ballooning correspondent of *The Times*. At about this time Andrée had invented the balloon-steering apparatus by the aid of which he hoped to reach the North Pole, and while making the attempt perished in the Arctic wastes. In the light of modern flying his plan seems very primitive and childish. No proper trial was made of this system before Andrée's departure and it had never before been carried into practice by any balloonist; therefore the experimental balloon trips of Mr. Percival Spencer, the well-known aeronaut, for the purpose of testing the possibilities of Andrée's theory of aerial navigation aroused a good deal of interest at the time; some account of my balloon trips with Spencer and the experiments which we carried on may be of interest.

The idea is a simple one and would at once have suggested itself to any sailor confronted with the problem of balloon navigation; for a vessel is often directed through the water by the employment of precisely the same method as that proposed by the aeronaut. If a vessel is anchored in a crowded narrow place, with a strong tide running, so that she cannot be got under weigh without incurring great risk of drifting foul of vessels anchored close astern, she dredges so as to get clear of them—that is, the cable is hove short—which causes the vessel to drag slowly, and the tide, running under her at a faster rate than she is dragging, affords steerage way and enables the helmsman to direct his craft

as she drifts down stream, stern first. It is the custom of the Norfolk wherrymen to drop down the narrow rapid river at Yarmouth stern first, with sails furled, and long chains trailing from their bows over the muddy bottom, thus retarding their progress and providing the steerage way needed to keep them clear of obstacles, and to shoot the bridges.

Now the conditions of a balloon floating in the air are exactly those of a vessel with sails lowered drifting on the water. The balloon travels through the air at the same rate as the wind current ; no system of steering gear can alter its course, for it has no steerage way. But if by some means the aeronaut can retard the rate of the balloon's drifting, so that the wind travels faster than the balloon, a current of air will make itself felt, and a sail attached to the car might be so trimmed as to act like a vessel's rudder and to deflect, to some extent at least, the course of the balloon. Even as the Norfolk wherryman tows his chains over his bow, so does the balloonist tow his trail rope in order to check the drift. Experiments have shown that the friction produced by a considerable length of rope dragging over the ground not only retards the rate of the balloon's drifting, but tends to keep the balloon at a lower altitude than were she sailing freely, with the rope coiled away in the car.

It was arranged that Mr. Spencer, Mr. Lawrence Swinburne, Lieutenant H. O. Mann, R.E., and myself should, on the first favourable opportunity, undertake a journey in a balloon provided with a trail rope of three-inch hemp, five hundred feet in length, and a steering sail similar to that carried by Andrée ; it being our object to test Andrée's system as completely as circumstances would allow, and to obtain data that might be of service when future experiments were made in the same direction. The balloon selected by Mr. Spencer was an excellent one for our purpose, being the *Excelsior*, the large balloon of nearly sixty thousand cubic feet capacity, fifty feet in diameter, that had been making frequent ascents at the Earl's Court exhibition.

So one day we met on the little island at Earl's Court, where for so long the captive balloon, surrounded by mimic tropical scenery, had stood moored. The wind

was westerly, and it would in all probability carry us over the Essex plains, where there was some very open country, so that we might be able to experiment with our apparatus without running much risk of damaging property beneath. The sail was fitted before we started. It was a square sail of duck canvas, twelve feet each way. Its head was secured to the network of the balloon, and the foot was bent on to a bamboo spar which was lashed horizontally across the stout hoop above our heads to which the car was slung. The sail therefore was a fixture ; it was not trimmed by sheets, but, as I will explain further on, was made to present the required angle to the wind, by so manipulating the trail rope as to revolve the balloon itself on its axis. The balloon was not provided with a shutter valve, but with what is termed a rending valve. The rending valve is generally used with captive balloons, as the leakage of gas is much less than when a shutter valve is employed ; once torn open you cannot close it again, as you can the shutter valve. You must descend even if it be on the open sea ; so you must pick up your landing place carefully, and once and for all, before you haul on the valve rope.

All being ready, we four got into the car, the order to let go was given, and the balloon shot up like an arrow from a bow, and in less than three minutes we had risen to a height of three thousand feet, all London spreading beneath us like a map. Eighteen minutes after our start we crossed the Isle of Dogs and looked down on miles of docks, sheet after sheet of water spreading beneath us on which lay vessels of every description from the mighty liner to the barge, appearing like toy boats, a bird's-eye view of England's greatest port, that, better than anything else could have done, gave one an idea of the immense shipping trade of London.

And now, having almost crossed the capital from its western to its eastern extremity, we saw ahead of us the open country beyond, on which a bright sunshine was then streaming, the green pastures of Essex and the gardens of Kent. From the Isle of Dogs we took our "departure," as they would say at sea, taking bearings of familiar landmarks ; for it was now necessary to watch our course and to calculate whither the wind was carrying

us. We soon satisfied ourselves that we were travelling about east by north, which enabled us to avoid Sea Reach, where the river takes a bend to the north and where the broadening estuary becomes a danger to the aeronaut. Our course now gradually took us away from the river, and suddenly we seemed to have left the teeming streets behind us. The roar of the city no longer made itself heard ; it was still on the earth beneath as it was with us in the sky, for we were sailing over the thinly-populated countryside—the swampy wastes and broad flats of Barking and Dagenham, and moist pasture land of vivid green, intersected by numberless creeks and draining ditches.

The country was getting clear enough for our purpose, so we put our trail rope over the side, let out gas, and descended till we were about three hundred feet above the ground, thus a considerable length of our rope was trailing behind us over the fields and occasionally over plantations of trees. We had passed over a high wood, the car tumbling about with violent jerks as the rope got entangled with the trees and freed itself alternately, and suddenly we came to a garden and lawn with what appeared to be a parsonage. The trail rope, suddenly freed from the trees, struck the front of the parsonage with a resounding smack, broke some windows, and carried away some chimney pots as the balloon sailed over. Some people came out and shook their fists at us. Then we crossed some open meadows. The effect of the drag of the trail rope on our speed at once made itself perceptible and we felt quite a fresh wind blowing behind us.

The end of the trail rope, I must explain, was attached to the hoop above our heads, so that the drag of the rope kept that part of the hoop aft, preventing the balloon from revolving on its axis ; while the sail, which bellied out on the opposite side of the hoop, was kept square to the wind. Two lines were attached to the trail rope at a point a few feet below the car ; these lines led through two blocks fastened to the extreme right and left of the hoop, the falls of these lines descending into the car. Now it is obvious that by hauling on one or the other of these lines, so as to take upon it the weight of the trail rope, one transfers the strain of the rope to the block

through which that line is rove, and that the hoop is consequently swung round bringing the sail to an angle with the wind.

We happened to be running parallel to a railway line when we made our first test. Spencer suggested that we should attempt to deflect our course to the right. We accordingly hauled on the right hand line till we had our sail at an angle of forty-five degrees to the wind. The effect soon made itself seen. Our course began to form an angle with the railway, and our trail rope, instead of towing behind us in a straight line, formed a great curve on the ground, like the wake of a steamer that is changing her course. When the balloon had settled down to its new course and the rope straightened again we found that we were going E.N.E. We now proceeded to try what the balloon would do on the other gybe; so we slacked up the right hand line and hauled on the left hand line, bringing the sail to the same angle of forty-five degrees with the wind, but on the opposite side. The balloon now acquired an east-half-south course, the difference between the two extreme deflections we had produced being therefore two-and-a-half points or nearly thirty degrees.

While we were engaged on these experiments we got right over a very long straight bit of railway line, and were dragging our trail rope down the middle of it. Suddenly a train appeared in sight. There was no time to get the rope off the line by steering her, for that was a slow operation, so we set to and hauled in the trail rope as fast as we possibly could. We got it off the ground and it just grazed the train as it rushed by. It was a near shave for the train might have wound us up and brought about a disaster unique in the history of railway collisions. We got into a few more difficulties with buildings and people below, and came to the conclusion that Andrée's steering apparatus was scarcely suitable for aerial navigation over a populous country, but might be useful for a balloon voyage across the Atlantic, or across the level of the Sahara. In one respect it would be of service to one undertaking a long voyage. The even altitude maintained by the use of the trail rope lessens the waste of gas; for it must be remembered that though the friction

of the trail rope drags the balloon down, the balloon is also relieved of ballast to the extent of the rope that is on the ground, two opposing forces that tend to keep the balloon in equilibrium.

When we got near the North Sea we decided to descend, so having selected a good place the grapnel was put out, the silk valve was torn away, out poured the gas, and down we came in the middle of a field. We procured a cart to take the balloon to the nearest railway station, and returned to London. Further experiments were made shortly afterwards during the balloon's voyage across a broad part of the Channel.

CHAPTER XXIII

Back to the Sudan.—The battle of Abu Hamed.—An ever receding front.—Our vain chase of it.—Railway making as you wait.—A Dervish jester.—Crawling up the Nile.—Detained at Merawi.

AT the beginning of August, 1897, the war correspondents had gathered at Cairo—Scudamore, Pearce, Beaman, Seppings Wright, Frederick Villiers, Sheldon and Maud. If our papers had foreseen what was to happen in this, the second summer's advance of the Nile Expeditionary Force, I think it probable that none of us would have been sent out to the Sudan, for with us it was a question of making bricks without straw. As the army advanced the Dervishes retired; there was but one fight, and the correspondents were not present at that. We did some interesting travelling through strange countries it is true, indeed more extensive travelling than any war correspondents, I believe, have ever done before. We travelled on horseback, camels, mules and in small sailing craft over a considerable portion of Africa, and I, for my part, being sent to the Abyssinian border, at the end of the campaign, had about a thousand miles more journeying than the rest.

But I do not think that our respective papers would have thus sent us out on a pleasant riding tour had they realized that there would be no sensational events to report for the benefit of the stay-at-homes in armchairs, and had they further realized how costly would be these wanderings. For things were not made easy for the correspondents who accompanied an Egyptian expedition. The commissariat arrangements were designed only for the native troops. The Egyptian Army is the most mobile army in the world, with the exception perhaps of the old Congo army, which devoured the enemy's dead after a battle, and so had very little to carry. The needs of the fellahin and Sudanese troops are few; there is a strict economy of transport that would astonish those who have only seen service in India or the colonies. Consequently the correspondent had to make his own arrangements; he could not draw rations for himself

from the commissariat. For the greater part of the time he was not allowed even to draw forage for his animals. He had to organize his own transport and supply himself with all he needed. When one remembers the immense distances to be traversed on such an expedition as this, for the most part through desert, or Dervish-wasted regions, producing nothing, one will realize that the correspondent had to make careful and complete preparations before setting out for the Sudan, and organize successive caravans to keep himself supplied, more especially on the particular campaign before us, so vague were its ends, its ultimate objective whether Berber, Omdurman or beyond, unknown, its duration whether three months or eighteen a matter on which we could form no opinion.

As no horses could be procured in the south, we correspondents bought all the horses we required at Cairo, and here too we had to engage our body servants and grooms, complete our outfit and lay in a sufficiency of stores for some months to come. In the spring of the previous year, when correspondents were engaging their servants, the latter showed considerable reluctance to accompany us to the front, and it was with some difficulty that I found a syce at Assouan ; for it was believed and openly stated by many of the natives that we were fated to be annihilated by the Dervishes. But this year it was very different. The Dongola expedition had destroyed the prestige of the Khalifa, and the timid people had acquired confidence in the fortunes of the Sirdar and the Egyptian arms. Among many signs of this change in the feelings of the people was their readiness to come with us. During my stay in Cairo there were ever gathered outside my hotel a crowd of servants of all classes, packets of testimonials in hand, eager to be engaged. My old Dinka, Abdul, became once more my body servant. He, by the way, had never been one of the timid ones.

We relied on Cook and Sons for the transport up to Assouan of ourselves, servants, horses and everything that we needed for the campaign save the camels, on which we might have to rely for the transport of our impedimenta later on. How and when we should procure camels we did not yet know, for we heard that the

Government had bought up all available camels on the line of communication for the purposes of the expedition.

Cook's sphere of influence then terminated at Assouan, for beyond that was the military Mudirieh, under military law, with all the railways and river navigation in the hands of the Sirdar. In this city we were detained for awhile, for we were ordered not to proceed south of Assouan until the Director of Military Intelligence, Colonel Wingate, should here join us. When we reached Assouan there was delivered to us a long telegram from the Sirdar addressed to the correspondents, giving the details of the capture of Abu Hamed. This news took us quite by surprise, for all the officers from the front whom we met at Cairo were of the opinion that there would be no advance for some time to come, and foretold that we should have to wait idle for months at Merawi. The defeat of the Dervishes at Abu Hamed had been a crushing one, but General Hunter's victory had cost us the lives of two excellent officers, Major Sidney and Lieutenant Fitz-Clarence, both of the 10th Sudanese Regiment.

We were disappointed at having thus missed the first fight of the campaign, but we looked forward to severe fighting at Berber, or at the fifth cataract, where the Dervishes had guns posted on the cliffs on either side of the difficult narrow channel, by which alone our gun-boats could pass. We did not then know that we were fated never to reach the front, that it would ever recede before us as we travelled on, like the fabled El Dorado from the eager seekers of that golden city. When we left Cairo the front was at Merawi. When we reached Assouan we found that it had moved some hundred and thirty miles south ; then we learnt that this elusive front was yet another hundred and forty miles or so farther removed from us, being at Berber, and even beyond. At Assouan we obtained permission to push on to Wady Halfa, and embarked just above the cataract on a Government post boat, a stern-wheeler which ploughed its way against the turbid flood, progressing so slowly that people walking on the shore easily outstripped us, so that it took us five days to accomplish our journey of two hundred and ten miles.

Wady Halfa was a good object lesson of Kitchener's methods in the Sudan. Nearly the whole town had been

razed, and in its place now spread a network of railway lines and a congregation of workshops and sheds full of machinery and railway material. A marvellous amount of work had been accomplished here in the last six months, much of it under the personal supervision of the Sirdar himself. The starting point of both the Dongola and Abu Hamed railways, then in course of construction, Wady Halfa had developed into a sort of Sudanese Crewe, one great workshop, in which the young officers of the Royal Engineers, with the assistance of civil engineers of nearly every European nationality, and natives who had been taught their trade by the Englishmen, kept the rolling stock in repair. Here were iron and brass foundries, where all the necessary forging was carried through.

The new Halfa was indeed a triumph of engineering enterprise. Strange, indeed, it seemed and incongruous, standing as it did amid the sands of the remote Nubian desert, a busy bustling place, noisy with the clanging of hammers on metal, the whirring of machinery, the shrieking of locomotive whistles—a very Babel, where one heard, spoken by the artisans, half the tongues of Europe and Africa; a place where everybody had to work hard, including the convicts in their clinking fetters, criminals from Lower Egypt who unloaded the vessels and were employed on other unskilled labour.

Kitchener's methods, as I have remarked, were here exemplified. His policy was to advance slowly and deliberately, so far each year, and at each step to consolidate the power of the Egyptian Government. He would run no unnecessary risk. From each forward step there would be no going back; to whatsoever point an advance was made there we would remain, presenting an invulnerable front. The very deliberation of this resistless progress was calculated to demoralize an enemy. I remember how, some years ago, when conversing with natives of Chinese Turkestan, I was much struck by the deep impression that was made on them by the similarly deliberate march of the Chinese Army that had been sent to crush the rebellious Yakoub Khan who had usurped the rule of Yarkund. For two years, across immense distances, from China proper, advanced that army, making roads and sowing and reaping two crops on its way; the

long protracted, ever approaching menace apparently dismayed and demoralized the rebel Mussulmans more effectually than would even a severe defeat, for the army of Yakoub melted away without striking a blow before the Chinese forces were within sight of the walls of Yarkund.

While we were at Wady Halfa, Scudamore and I travelled to the rail end of the Wady Halfa and Abu Hamed railway, one hundred and thirty-eight miles out in the desert, and watched with great interest the work of constructing the railway carried on by our young Royal Engineer officers. One realized what British officers can do when put on their mettle. Here they were displaying untiring keenness and energy, establishing an admirable order and discipline, and by virtue of their knowledge of how to deal with natives, converting hundreds of hitherto absolutely untrained men—a large number of whom, indeed, were savages from the far south, who but a few months back were fighting against us in the Mahdist ranks—into excellent railway navvies and fairly skilled mechanics.

The advantage of carrying a railway across the Korosko desert a distance of about two hundred and thirty miles, and so avoiding the great loop (about seven hundred miles in length) formed by the Nile in this portion of its course, had long been recognized. The strategical value of the line was obvious and its completion was awaited before a further advance would be made in the direction of Khartoum. The railway throughout traverses one of the most utterly desert regions on the face of the earth. It had apparently never been trodden by the foot of man, but at one point it crosses a route which seems to have been taken a long time ago by a large body of men, for here the railway engineers came across a mysterious collection of many hundreds of broken *zeers*, or earthenware water-coolers ; they were two-handled, graceful amphoræ of a shape unknown in modern Egypt.

This discovery naturally started a good deal of conjecture. Some remembered that Cambyses once sent an army across this desert, which entirely disappeared and was never heard of again. The construction of this desert railway was being pushed on at the rate of a mile and a half a day, which was very good work when it is borne in mind that water had to be brought up from the

Nile, not only to feed the engines, but to supply the two thousand men employed on the construction, and that progress was entirely dependent on the resources behind and the workshops at Wady Halfa.

Lieutenant Girouard, D.S.O., the Director of Egyptian Military Railways, Scudamore and myself met at Wady Halfa station at five p.m. on August 21, to take the evening water train to rail end. At an early hour the next morning our train reached its destination, an extensive railway camp, one hundred and thirty-one miles from Wady Halfa. When we arrived the camp was almost deserted, the men being at work at rail end five miles further on. This entire camp was advanced a few miles every three or four days as the work progressed ; it was to be struck that very evening to be pitched again about six miles on ; a temporary siding was carried along with it and was rapidly relaid at each fresh encampment. Shortly after nine a.m. a train rolled in from rail end with all its trucks covered with the men of the railway battalions who had already laid one thousand yards of rail that morning, and were returning for their midday rest and meal. They all, both yellow Egyptians and coal-black Sudanese, appeared to be in the best of spirits. These people have a great capacity for railway construction, and seemed to thoroughly enjoy their work. Of the cheery, ever-grinning Sudanese, numbers, as I have said, were Dervishes but a few months since fighting against us, and some were still wearing the *jibbehs*, or Mahdist uniforms, from which the coloured patches had been torn off.

Among the men who now leapt off the railway trucks and hurried off to their breakfast was one black ex-Dervish worthy of mention. This was Somid, the Sudanese jester of the camp, who could always raise a roar of laughter in the working gangs, and was of distinct service, keeping up the men's spirits as he did by his clever mimicry and queer tricks. A bugler in Hicks Pasha's ill-fated army, he was captured by the Dervishes and taken to the Mahdi's camp at Omdurman. There he discovered that he could make his life easier by playing the buffoon, and he became the jester of Wad-el-Bishara, the famous Emir who commanded the Dervish forces that were opposed to us in the previous year. He used to be called up to amuse his master's friends by giving

imitations of the British officers with whom he had been brought into contact. Recaptured by us at the battle of Hafir he now, when not employed in rail-laying, kept the camp in a roar by his close imitations of his former master, Bishara, and other Dervish notables.

Seeing strangers in camp, he approached us with a comical waddle, and then proceeded, surrounded by a crowd of his appreciative countrymen, to favour us with what was certainly a very extraordinary entertainment. First he impersonated the great Emir Yunes; sword over shoulder he swaggered up and down, as through a Dervish camp, boasting of his prowess and declaring that he would destroy the enemies of God and drive the English into the sea. Then he suddenly became Wad-el-Bishara, the truer soldier, with graver mien; speaking calmly and deliberately he walked with slow dignity, a leader of men, giving orders to his officers in precise terms. The different characters of the two Emirs were so clearly brought out by this close observer and marvellous mimic that one felt one would almost be able to recognize the two men with certainty if one ever met them. From the grave he passed to the ludicrous; he took off the mannerisms of a native clerk on the railway works, of an impatient British *bimbashi* carrying on a conversation through the telephone with an indistinct but imperturbable Egyptian at the other end of the wire.

Next, with a ghastly realism, he gave us a representation of a hanging man. It was true to life and to death, for Somid must have witnessed many an execution by hanging in the Dervish camp. Then he became Wad-el-Bishara again at the battle of Hafir, encouraging his men and laughing scornfully at the shells which burst around him, the sound of which Somid faithfully reproduced. A variety of other tricks were performed by this versatile black.

Later in the day we came across him again at work on the railway. He had just laid down a rail, and seeing us, proceeded to imitate the action of one sketching a portrait. In a moment we recognized every turn of the head and hand, the pose, even the expression of face of one of our war artists.

Shortly after midday a long train came in from Halfa, carrying all the material needed for the afternoon's work; that is, sufficient rails, sleepers, bolts, spikes, etc., for the

construction of a mile and a half of the line, and also a mile and a half of telegraph and telephone wire with the necessary poles, for the laying of the wires keeps pace with the railway construction. The train drew up and on to it leaped the one thousand two hundred men with their tools, who then, sitting on the piled up rails and sleepers, were carried off to their work at rail end, where they were to convert all the material with them on the train into a completed section of rail, telegraph and telephone line before nightfall.

After lunching with the Royal Engineer officers we went to rail end on an engine and watched the completion of the section. It was indeed a memorable scene. The one thousand two hundred men were scattered all along the line for about a mile, engaged in all the various operations of railway construction from the preliminary banking to the final straightening and lifting of the rails. The organization and discipline stirred one's admiration ; the men were throwing themselves into their work with an extraordinary enthusiasm. There was a total absence of confusion, it was an orderly bustle, no man getting in another's way, each one knowing exactly what he had to do. So soon as a gang, whether rail layers, spikers or others, had completed a section, the native officer in charge sounded his whistle and the gang moved on to commence work on the next section. Advancing in a parallel line to, and keeping pace with, the gangs on the railway construction, was the party that planted the telegraph poles and reeled out the telegraph and telephone wires.

The heavy train that carried the material moved on at intervals as the construction progressed, so as to bring the rails and sleepers as near as possible to the men who had to carry and lay them. This train did not even follow the work, but pushed on well into the middle of it, running on the yet unfinished line so soon as the rails were capable of carrying it—the parties that did the straightening and other final work coming on behind the train. It was a mile long line of men constructing a railway through all the stages of the work. Every advance of the train and of the successive working parties from section to section meant so many hundreds of yards more of completed railway thrust into the desert. One realized this best when one sat on the train and felt it move on a

little way every few minutes. We timed our progress, and found that we were on the average doing eighty yards in six minutes. The absolutely finishing work on each section is done by a gang who are employed on the final lifting, straightening, packing, and boxing. They follow on about three miles behind the main working parties, thus allowing several heavy trains to pass over the line and settle it before these final adjustments and corrections are made.

At last the day's work was over ; all the rails that had been brought in the material train had been laid. One hundred and thirty-eight miles of the railway had now been constructed, and another ninety miles would bring it to the Nile at Abu Hamed. And now the old camp was struck, and soon we saw rolling into the new railhead a train with trucks piled high with tents, furniture, baggage —all the paraphernalia of a camp. It was wonderful then to observe within how short a time all was unloaded and the new camp pitched. The lines of tents seemed to leap out of the desert sands, and then at once all round us began to rise the smoke of the numerous cooking fires where the men were preparing their suppers.

We were now but ninety miles from our immediate destination Abu Hamed, but the Sirdar had decreed that we correspondents should not travel thither by the short desert route in front of us, so we had to go back to Halfa and follow the great loop of the Nile to Abu Hamed, a distance in all of about seven hundred and thirty miles. The Dongola railway had then been carried about two hundred miles up the Nile to Kermah, so we were able to avail ourselves of it for the first part of our journey, but our horses had to march along the Nile bank, for there was no transport for them by train or boat, and even officers had to march their chargers when proceeding beyond Halfa. On the Nile above Kermah we got occasional lifts from the gunboats. At Debbeh the news came to us that the Dervishes had evacuated Berber, and had retired to Metemmeh ; so the elusive front was now four hundred miles beyond Abu Hamed ! The farther we rode on the farther off became our objective ; but we were cheered by the reflection that we were approaching Omdurman, and that there at any rate the Dervishes would have to make a stand.

CHAPTER XXIV

Thieving natives.—Unfriendly villagers.—Hebbeh.—An accursed spot.—Wreck of the *Abbas* and murder of her crew.—Berber.—The end of the campaign.—We sell our stores and ride to Suakin.—Osman Digna's country.—The "friend of God."

WHEN we reached Merawi we were informed that we should have to stay there until the Sirdar sent us permission to push on. At Merawi and Korti we found a considerable portion of the Egyptian Army guarding this vulnerable portion of our line of communication, for there was a possibility of the Dervishes attempting an attack from Metemmeh across the Baynada desert on this bend of the Nile. We pitched our camp outside Merawi and soon a fit of growling came upon us; for though this be the land of the lotus it is not the country for inaction, and yet here we were bound to stay for an indefinite time, while far to the south of us troops were advancing, gunboats and cavalry patrolling, and other interesting things were happening, which we were anxious to witness and record. We could now fully sympathize with other tarriers in this land in olden times who, like ourselves, found it a wearisome business to make bricks without straw.

Our most exciting occupation in the correspondents' camp was the looking out for burglars and thieves, and, though these committed almost nightly depredations they always evaded us. On two occasions, it is true, they were seen and took to flight; we gave chase in vain, and obviously we could not fire at them with our followers encamped all round, and a crowded native village immediately behind. Our servants entertained a wholesome fear of these thieves, who carry sharp knives and are ready to use them. They displayed considerable skill. Black and naked they crawled down upon us on their stomachs on dark nights, cut into our tents and rifled our baggage. One man actually entered a tent round which four men were sleeping and one was keeping watch, carried off a large portmanteau to the river bank, there ripped it open with his knife, took out everything that was of any use to him and went off with his spoil

unobserved, leaving the bag lying on the shore. Merawi had, indeed, earned an evil reputation for these practices, so that we were warned as to what would befall us here even before we left Cairo.

The thieves even stole our fowls which we only obtained with great difficulty, not that hunger prompted them, but that they might sell them back to us or to other Englishmen. A scraggy chicken was an expensive luxury up here, for the natives were civilized enough to have formed a corner in poultry and other produce. They had the effrontery to argue that when they sold us a miserable fowl for ten piastres they were conferring a great favour on us, for they said, "A British army will be marching up here soon, and we know British armies of old. We can sell every fowl to them at twenty piastres and more." So was it with forage, sheep, the hire of camels and everything else. One result of our 1884 Gordon relief expedition was that the price of all commodities rose tremendously so soon as an Englishman appeared on the scene. The grasping people of Merawi were doomed to bitter disappointment later on, and the immense profits of which they dreamt were never realized; for it was obvious that British troops would not march through Merawi, or even come within one hundred and thirty miles of it, but would be carried by train from Wady Halfa to Abu Hamed.

It was not till October 5 that the correspondents were allowed to push on towards the front which, like a rainbow, was ever the same distance from us, however far we advanced. This time we had permission to proceed through Abu Hamed to Berber, about four hundred miles distant. We hired baggage camels and their drivers from sheikhs in the Eastern desert, for this year we had not purchased camels, but relied on the countries we traversed to supply them. We were advised to carry our weapons on our persons as the people we should meet during our journey had but very recently been brought under the subjection of Egypt, knew little of the stern canons of military law, and might be disposed to follow their predatory instincts and rob the travellers.

No supplies were procurable on the way, so we carried, in addition to our tents and baggage, two months' pro-

visions for ourselves, forage for our horses and camels, and food for our servants. We found that with four camels to each correspondent we had sufficient transport ; there were also riding camels for guides and chief camel-men, and a few donkeys for the use of our body servants. We certainly had a picturesque and ruffianly looking following with us. Our men were wild Arabs of the Shaggieh, Monasir, Kababieh and other tribes, or Sudanese blacks from the still more remote south ; of these nearly all had been Dervishes a few months earlier, and had fought against us at Hafir and elsewhere. One party of our camel-men were as ferocious-looking a lot of cut-throats as one could find anywhere. These belonged to various tribes, and occasionally, during our halts, some ancient tribal jealousy or unavenged wrong would lead to brawls among these hot-headed people ; knives would be drawn, clubs would be wielded, and possibly life would have been lost had we not interfered.

So as to maintain order and discipline we appointed Gomma, a Kababish Arab, sheikh of the camel-men ; it was his duty to give the word for the start and halt, to keep our caravan together, to drive up stragglers, and to keep watch on our wild ex-Dervishes. Gomma rode a gigantic, fast-trotting camel of the best desert breed, and as he sat on it he looked an imposing figure in his white robe, with Remington rifle slung on his shoulder, and his great Dervish sword at his thigh. He had been a soldier of the Mahdi and had known Gordon in Khartoum. Gomma had shed a good deal of blood in his time ; he was a typical desert Arab, with the virtues and vices characteristic of his race—independent, brave, and cruel, avaricious, but true to his salt. He made his authority felt among our quarrelsome followers. We told him we wanted peace in camp, so he promptly restored peace by dint of somewhat violent methods, in which his hippopotamus-hide *kourbash* played a part.

Once, when it looked as if a bloody battle was about to be fought between two parties of these rival tribesmen, Gomma came to us with a suggestion :

" We can soon settle this," he said, " I have four followers ; we, with you five (the correspondents) can easily fall upon and kill all these men."

He was disappointed when he found that, much as we loved peace, we were disinclined to attain it by engaging in a general massacre of our men.

As we approached the long stretch of dangerous rapids and broken water that forms the fourth cataract of the Nile, we were traversing the district of the Shaggieh tribe, and found that we were no longer among a friendly population. The Shaggieh had done some good fighting for the Mahdi and their chief Emir was devoted to the Dervish cause. The people told us with pride that all their Emirs and the bulk of their fighting men were with the Khalifa at Omdurman. These people were still Dervishes at heart. They had not suffered from Dervish oppression so severely as the inhabitants of the rich Dongola province, where the inhabitants welcomed us with genuine delight as their deliverers; the Shaggieh had their chiefs and their relations still in the Khalifa's camp, and they failed to see how their position would be bettered by the introduction of a new regime. We were certainly not made welcome in the villages we passed on our way. We found the inhabitants sulky and disposed to avoid all intercourse with us; they refused to sell us sheep, grain or milk; they kept their women out of our sight and plainly showed us that they did not regard us as friends.

From Hosh-el-Garuf there are two routes to Abu Hamed, one of which avoids the loops formed by the river and crosses the desert; this is the regular convoy route. The other route follows the windings of the river. This last was the route by which we decided to travel, as by going this way we should pass through the villages of men who, up to quite recently, were among the most desperate of our foes, and places which no European had visited since 1885, and where, therefore, it would be very interesting to study the attitude of the tribesmen.

We passed through villages of the Movain tribe, where the inhabitants, as usual, refused to sell us provisions, and kept sulkily out of our way, but their queer little black children had not yet acquired racial or religious prejudices, and became quite friendly after we had given them some dainties out of our stores. One morning as we rode along there suddenly opened out before us one of the prettiest bits of scenery we had seen in the Sudan.

In front of us the river rushed between rocky reefs and grass-grown islets ; on the bank were clumps of fine date-palms, and a broad terrace with more cultivation than I had yet seen on this journey, fields of *dhurra* and cotton all irrigated by one great *sakieh*, whose creaking machinery of clumsy wooden cog wheels was kept slowly turning throughout the day and for half the night by sleek oxen, goaded by naked black urchins who solemnly relieved each other every few hours. The huts of the village stood on rocky ground at a little distance from the cultivation.

It looked a very peaceful spot, with no sounds in our ears save the murmuring of the river, the droning of the water-wheel, and the happy singing of many birds in the trees. But this was Hebbeh, a village with an evil history, an accursed place in the eyes of our Kababieh followers, the scene of the murder of Colonel Stewart and his party in 1884 ; and in testimony of that treacherous act we saw before us, on a rocky islet of the Nile, the wreck of the steamer *Abbas* still lying, left high and dry by the now falling Nile, her rusty iron sides glowing red in the sunshine. Nothing was left of her save a portion of he bow, her boilers and some broken framework.

It will be remembered that towards the close of the siege of Khartoum, Gordon sent the gunboat *Abbas* down the river with Colonel Stewart, Frank Power (*The Times* correspondent) and a number of Greeks and Egyptians on board. She was run on this rock—purposely it is supposed—by the native *reis*. Colonel Stewart and his companions, disarmed by the apparent friendship of Fakri Wad Otman, the sheikh at Hebbeh, and his Movain tribesmen, put out in a boat and landed at the village. Fakri Wad Otman invited them into his house and treated them with hospitality, but at the same time he dispatched messengers to collect a number of his followers. When these had arrived he gave the signal, there was a sudden rush on his unarmed guests, and all were put to death under conditions of great barbarity, for the Movains had no swords or firearms with them, and slaughtered their guests with sticks and stones.

This treacherous murder was never avenged on its real perpetrators, and Fakri Wad Otman himself died at Omdurman a few years ago. In 1885, when our troops

were returning from the Sudan, a detachment was sent to destroy all the houses and water-wheels at Hebbeh. According to the inhabitants we were the first Englishmen to visit Hebbeh "since the English blew up the houses with gunpowder."

It was interesting to note the manner of our reception by these people, some of whom may have taken a part in the murder thirteen years before; some were sons of the murderers, while all, undoubtedly, remembering the crime that had disgraced their village and tribe, felt some guilty fears when they saw white men approaching.

We rode in and selected a resting place under the palms near the *sakieh*. We found that the cables and warps of the wrecked steamer had been used for the guys and lashings of this water-wheel. At first the villagers did not approach us, but stared at us from a distance with sullen curiosity; some of the younger had probably never seen an Englishman before. The men had a more forbidding and furtive look than any I had yet seen; that they could on occasion be both cruel and treacherous one could well believe. We approached some of them, and led them, very reluctant, to converse with us. They told us that their Emirs and chief fighting men had gone to Omdurman —the same story we had heard at other villages. Of the massacre they were naturally loth to speak, fearing lest the object of our questioning them on that subject was the preparation for a coming vengeance. It was impossible to persuade them to sell us *dhurra*, sheep, goats, milk, or anything else we required. We walked through the village, not forgetting to carry our revolvers, for we could not trust these men of Hebbeh. We found that the doors and roofs of the huts were made out of the iron plates of the steamer's sides, and that within the huts were buckets and other articles that had evidently been taken from the wreck.

Gomma, our sheikh of the camel-men, was very indignant at the outrage committed by the men of Hebbeh. He had no fault to find with them for having murdered these Europeans, but he was shocked at their having done so after the eating of salt had taken place. No desert Arab, according to him, would have done such a thing, but these riverside people had no religion. "Let us kill

these villagers and burn their village," he suggested, " it will be a righteous deed."

But we left Hebbeh in peace, and pushed on. In good time we reached Abu Hamed and thence proceeded to ride along the banks of the Nile to Berber. We found the once wealthy city of Berber, like Dongola, in ruins. We came across a group of empty roofless houses and in these we, our servants and animals soon made ourselves comfortable. Berber was now the Sirdar's headquarters, so we went to him without delay to learn our fate. He was very gracious, enquired how we had enjoyed our long ride up the Nile, and informed us that there would be no further advance of the expeditionary force that year, that the winter would be occupied in consolidating our dominion in the Sudan, and that in the following year we should be at Omdurman. He took it for granted that the correspondents would now leave the Sudan and return to England, there to stay until the word was given for their return.

So we left him, and in no cheery frame of mind discussed our long journey back to the sea down the winding Nile.

" It is only about three hundred miles across the desert to Suakin," said one of us consulting a map.

" That is the way for us to take if we can only get permission to use that route."

We went back to the Sirdar and asked if there were any objection to our riding down in a body to Suakin on camels.

" I thought you would come back and put that question to me," said Kitchener. " The route you mention is by no means a safe one, and has not been used by Europeans since Gordon's time. It would not do for the Dervishes to capture you and use you as hostages while bargaining with us. You are all armed, I suppose ? "

We replied in the affirmative.

" Then," said the Sirdar, " you can go, if you go at once. General Hunter is making a reconnaissance to the south of that route, and while he is in the Eastern desert the Dervishes are not likely to molest you. But supply yourselves with good camels, travel fast, and keep your eyes open."

This unexpected permission cheered us up, for it was an interesting region that we were to traverse—Osman Digna's country. That famous slave-dealer and Dervish leader, who had given us so much trouble, had, like the

Mad Mullah, been reported killed and buried on many occasions, but always came to life again. At that time he was with the Khalifa's army in Omdurman.

We quickly settled our affairs in Berber. We were to travel very light, so we sent the baggage we could spare down to Cairo and had an auction of our horses, donkeys, tents, stores, etc. I was in want of some money, so drawing a chit on *The Times* I exchanged it with an Arab merchant, no doubt a Dervish a few weeks back, for a sack full of Maria Theresa *swanzickers*—the currency of a great portion of Africa. In the more remote and wild parts of the world it was then always easier to cash a cheque or a chit than in more civilized countries. The more civilized the country the more difficult it is to get money. If an unknown person proffers a cheque in an English city, the banker or hotel-keeper refuses to cash it, whereas in Albania, Cuba, the extreme north of India, or Madagascar, I had no difficulty in getting money in exchange for an order to pay, written on any scrap of paper. The people of those parts have had experience only of straight Englishmen.

Making up my accounts once with Messrs. Cook on my return to civilization, they told me that these drafts drawn upon them in remote countries often did not come in to them for several years to be redeemed. For example, my Arab merchant in Berber would probably hand over my draft to some other Arab in payment of a debt, attaching his own guarantee to the foot of the draft, and this Arab in his turn would give it to some other Arab ; pasting on it his guarantee, and so on, until the document, with its appended guarantees, would become a yard or more in length. It would astonish the cashier of *The Times* to have presented to him one day for payment, my thirty year old draft with its fathom-long tail of Arabic guarantees. It may be added that the Arab merchant is ever a scrupulously honourable man in his business.

A sheikh supplied us with camels, and with a following of a dozen Arabs we rode down to Suakin, reaching it in eight days. The natives of Osman Digna's country were not particularly friendly, but we had no trouble on the way. When we were about half way to our destination, our servants astonished us by informing us that our store

of provisions had run out, and that we had no more food left. The correspondents had taken it in turn to be mess president and to superintend our supplies. It happened to be my week of mess presidentship when we sold our surplus stores at Berber, but I had of course put aside a sufficiency of provisions for our journey to Suakin. We now found that someone—probably when we were loading up our camels at Berber—had stolen a sackful of our stores. That day Gwynne had shot a small gazelle, so our supper was not wanting. But on the following day the hungry journalists began to grumble a bit, and good-humouredly told me that I was to blame insomuch as I had not more carefully looked after our camel-loads when we started. On this, I assured them that it would all come right, and that at two p.m. precisely on the morrow we should be in possession of all the provisions and luxuries that we should require, including red wine and cigars. I said that I did not know how this would come to pass but that like the prophetic Khalifa I had visions of the future, and that this food would come to us.

As we were in the middle of the desert on a road that had not been used since Gordon's time, it did not seem likely that my prophecy would be fulfilled, but an indeed remarkable coincidence occurred. As we jogged along on our camels the next day and the predicted hour approached my comrades chaffingly enquired of me, " O, friend of God (the title which the Khalifa had assumed) O, friend of God, where is the promised banquet ? We are famished." " Patience ! " I replied, " the hour is near ; do you see that cloud of dust on the horizon ? " Our Arabs had also seen the cloud of dust, and were preparing to meet a possible Dervish attack. But out of the cloud of dust we soon distinguished a long caravan of laden camels coming towards us, and some Europeans riding on horses. It was not a mirage, and when the caravan came up we were able to purchase everything we required. Angelo, the Greek storekeeper at Suakin, had received a telegram from the Sirdar, telling him that the road to Berber was temporarily open, and that he could forward to that city a caravan of stores. From that moment I was dubbed " the friend of God " by the correspondents, but I made no further attempt at divining the future.

CHAPTER XXV

I am sent to Eritrea.—Sail down the Red Sea in a dhow.—Arab navigation.—Arrive at Massowah.—Kindness of the Italian authorities.—Ride to Kassala.—Abyssinian soldiers.—The Katmia shrine.

WHEN we reached Suakin a cablegram was handed to me. It came from *The Times* and said briefly, "Go to Kassala." Kassala was the furthest outpost of the Italian colony of Eritrea, about three hundred miles from the sea. I knew that by treaty it was to be handed over on Christmas Day by the Italians to the Egyptian Government. So while the other correspondents returned by sea to England for Christmas, I set out again for another long journey in Africa. The caravan route (along which I travelled later) from Suakin to Kassala, a distance of two hundred and eighty miles, was at that time closed by Dervish raids, so I could not travel by that route; no steamer ran between Suakin and Massowah, whence I could journey by road to Kassala. So my only plan was to charter an Arab dhow, sail to Massowah, three hundred miles down the coast, and thence ride through Eritrea, another three hundred miles, to my destination.

I soon found the vessel for my purpose in the harbour, a dhow of about thirty tons burden called the *El Hamdi*. She was undecked, but her high stern was partly covered in, forming a poop on which the helmsman stood; so that under this I could find shelter during the voyage, and make myself comfortable despite the rats, cockroaches and mosquitoes that swarmed in that part of the vessel. The dhow belonged to Yembo, the port of Medina on the opposite Arabian coast, and was sailing under the Turkish flag. She was discharging a cargo of dates which she had brought from Yembo. She carried a crew of twelve men, Arabians and negroes of the Hedjaz. I came to terms with the Arab merchant who represented the owner, explained that I wished to put to sea as soon as possible, and in a few hours the dhow was at my disposal. I put on board my baggage, provisions and goatskins of water, and with my Dinka servant, Abdul, embarked.

It was now blowing a full gale from the north and it was very dark. The skipper did not like the look of the weather, and told me that he would not venture to navigate his vessel on such a night among the intricate coral reefs outside Suakin, so we remained at anchor until the morning.

The following day, November the 14th, broke wildly, and the gale was howling through our rigging. But my skipper was no timid mariner. Like most of these happy-go-lucky Mussulman sailor-men, of whom so many are lost each year in these treacherous Red Sea waters, he placed more faith in Kismet than in the barometer, so as soon as there was light in the east he roused his men, the anchor was weighed, the great *lateen* foresail was hoisted to an Arab chanty lustily shouted, and we were off like a greyhound through the smooth water inside the reef.

I soon discovered that the crew of my dhow were a fine cheery lot of men and excellent sailors. It was a picturesque crew too, that might well have sailed under the adventurous Sindbad himself. The skipper was a jovial, old, one-eyed mariner from Jeddah. The diet of the crew was simple and excellent ; they ate their fill of dates and rice, and hospitably brought me dishes of their food at each repast. They were very regular at their morning and evening devotions ; the skipper called them together at the proper hours, and himself chanted in rather a fine voice ; for being natives of Jeddah and Yembo, the ports of the two holiest of cities, Mecca and Medina, they were the most rigid of Mussulmans.

When we got outside the sheltering Suakin reef we found a heavy sea running, in which we rolled and plunged violently, occasionally shipping a good deal of water over our low sides, so that it became necessary to keep the hands constantly at the pumps. This operation was effected in a primitive fashion. Pumps there were none ; a trough formed of a hollowed palm tree was fastened across the vessel's waist transversely, its ends overlapping either bulwark. At the bottom of the vessel amidships was a square well, boarded in to prevent the sand ballast from falling into it. In this well stood one of the hands, knee deep in water, filling goatskin buckets from it as

fast as he was able, and handing them out to a hand above, who, in his turn, emptied them into the trough, whence the water poured overboard from one side or the other as the vessel rolled, a slow, happy-go-lucky process indeed, by which it would have been impossible to bale out the dhow had we shipped a really heavy sea into our open hold.

We were running before a steep following sea, but there was but a small chance of our being pooped, for like European vessels of old we had a towering poop that no wave ever reached, though we had comparatively low bows and little freeboard amidships. I occasionally stood on the poop and took a spell at the helm, and I found that she steered very easily, showing no tendency to broach to.

The skipper pressed the dhow under as much canvas as she could safely carry, and we had a few accidents on the way. First we sprang our heavy foreyard at the juncture of the two spars of which it is formed ; so the sail was lowered and we ran on more comfortably under the smaller mizzen which was now brought forward and hoisted on the foremast. Next, with a loud report, the sheet carried away in a squall, and the sail was split in various places before it could be secured and got down. We had, therefore, to run under bare poles for a short time, until the foresail yard was repaired. This was done very smartly—for Arab sailors have plenty of practice in patching up their invariably rickety spars and gear—up went our big foresail again and we rushed over the seas at our former rate. Every now and again we had to jib—a formidable operation in such weather with this huge *lateen*, which, like the English lugsail, has to be dipped and passed over to the other side at each jib or tack.

At sunset the skipper let go his anchor close under the shore, which was low and uninhabited. He explained to me that there was no safe anchorage further on with this wind blowing, and that the numerous islets and shoals among which we had to pick our way rendered navigation dangerous on a dark night. The next day the wind moderated. From a sack the crew produced a sail I had not yet seen, which proved to be a very large foresail of

light canvas, intended for use only in light breezes, and possibly in case of pursuit when the vessel was engaged in contraband trade. The mizzen, which had been repaired, was also hoisted. Whenever possible we sailed with our two *lateens* goose-winged.

We did not come to an anchor that night, as the coast was now clear, but sailed on. Our black mate was at the helm all night, for the steering had now to be done by compass, and he was the only one of the crew who understood the English box-compass he had with him on the poop, and of which he was inordinately proud.

On the following day the wind headed us and freshened considerably. We took long tacks, our lee bulwarks nearly level with the water, until the evening, when we came to an anchor outside Massowah, awaiting daylight to get in. We had made the voyage in a little over sixty hours, which was not bad work. Early on the following morning we sailed into the spacious harbour and let go our anchor. As soon as we had got *pratique* I bade farewell to my friendly skipper and his crew and put off to the quay in the dhow's boat. An Arab merchant placed a room at my disposal, for, as few strangers visit this seaport, it contained no hotels ; but good cafés and restaurants abound. The chief port of Eritrea is, undoubtedly, the pleasantest place on the Red Sea. As one sails into the well sheltered harbour, the bright white town, with its broad quays and well built houses, backed by the far cloud-capped mountains of the interior, presents a very pleasing appearance. The white, coral-paved town looks worthy to be chief port of an important colony, for the Italians have spent large sums in the construction of the quays, handsome barracks, hospitals and other public buildings.

Men of many races are to be seen in the streets of Massowah—Abyssinians, Arabs, Sudanese, Somalis, and others. Among the Europeans, England was but little represented, for a young employé of one of the principal Italian firms introduced himself to me as being my one fellow-countryman in the whole city, and he, by the way, was a Scot.

The military authorities at Massowah gave me permission to travel up the road to Kassala, and I had my

first experience of the exceeding kindness and courtesy with which accredited Englishmen are treated in this country, not only by the authorities, but by all the Italians encountered on the way. Here, for example, I was informed that relays of Government mules would await me at each post on the road, a favour of great service in a country where transport is not easily procurable.

On the morning of November 20, we started on our long ride, my servant, Abdul, and myself riding a mule each, two other mules carrying my baggage and stores. An escort of four native soldiers—Abyssinians—was sent with me. The uniform of these men is simple. They wear white cotton tunics and breeches of the same material that come to just below the knee. They have no boots, for the good reason that they prefer to walk barefooted. They are armed with the Italian magazine rifle. That they fight exceedingly well has been proved on many occasions, and they are cheery and amiable. Their walking powers are wonderful; one day, for example, we travelled by very rough rocky paths for forty-six miles across the mountains, and these barefooted men came in at the end with light, supple step, apparently as fresh as when they started.

To make this journey through this pleasant land was a very different matter from travelling in the Sudan, where one could ride for a fortnight along our line of communication without coming across a place in which a morsel of food could be purchased. Here, on this Eritrean road, one found at every halting place a comfortable inn, kept by an Italian or Greek, where fowls, salads, bread and Chianti could be purchased. In these *cantinas*, as these little taverns are here called, one is as comfortable as if one were travelling in Normandy and Brittany, but bedding, of course, must be carried with one.

Moreover, at all the military posts which I passed, I was invited to lodge in the hospitable officers' quarters, and was made a member of their mess. As we ascended into the highlands we passed through a beautiful country, typical of Abyssinia. The valleys were covered with bush and young green grass; occasionally we traversed a dense forest with an undergrowth of flowering shrubs beneath the higher trees; and convolvuli festooning the

branches. Chattering apes gambolled among the boughs and the wood was full of singing birds, scarlet plumaged parrots and gorgeously coloured butterflies. Streams of clear cold water ran down every little gully. Now and then from a height one commanded a splendid landscape. A green plain stretched beneath me and beyond it were mountains covered with dense green forest, the further ranges appearing purple in the distance, with dark violet shade in the hollows of the ravines. The high summits were concealed by masses of rolling cloud, and there was a mist in the atmosphere that was grateful after the dry clear skies of the Sudan. Abdul had never seen so much verdure before, and evidently thought it uncanny to be in so green a land.

After a three days' march we reached Asmara, the military centre of Eritrea, and the headquarters of General Caneva, who was then in command of the Italian forces in the colony. Asmara is on a wind-swept plateau eight thousand feet above the sea, on the watershed between the Nile and the Red Sea. It is defended by strong forts and here, too, are some fine buildings and handsome bungalows. Asmara has a bright, cheerful appearance. So is it with all places in the Italian colony. The hideous galvanized-iron structures and the plain wooden shanties of new British or American settlements are not to be found here ; in their place are stone or brick houses, with tiled roofs that remind one of Italy. Even where the buildings are less substantial they are not ugly ; the *tokuls*, with their steep thatched roofs, are picturesque, and even the canteens put up by the Italian and Greek traders are generally pleasing to the eye, covered, as they often are, with pumpkins and other climbing plants. The taste of the southern European makes him incapable of compassing the uncompromising unloveliness of one of our colonial up-country townships. And in other matters it is the same. Here at every little wayside *cantina* the owner cultivates his garden, and can supply the traveller with an appetizing meal with vegetables, fruit and salad, as well as with fowls and good red wine, and there is sure to be someone in the place who can cook an omelette. We may be the most successful colonizers, but so far as my experience goes, the people

in the French, Italian, Spanish, and Portuguese colonies understand better than our settlers how to live, and the traveller fares more comfortably when in them.

Another two days' march brought us to Keren, an important military post which was under the command of Colonel Count Samminatelli, who has many friends in the British Army, for as *Attaché Militaire* he was present at the battle of Tel-el-Kebir, and accompanied the subsequent Nile expedition.

In another two days I reached Agordat, the important centre of a military district. Here the Italian officers prevailed upon me to halt a day, which I was all the more ready to do as it gave me the opportunity of riding over the battlefield of Agordat with men who took part in that memorable action. The Italian officers, with two thousand Abyssinian mercenaries were here opposed to a force of twelve thousand Dervishes, chiefly Baggara. After a long and desperate fight, in the course of which both sides lost heavily, the Dervishes were completely routed, which shows how sturdily these Abyssinians can fight, even when opposed to greatly superior numbers.

Four days more travelling brought me to Kassala. Since I had crossed the watershed at Asmara I had been gradually descending ; the climate had become hotter and drier. I had left behind me the pleasant green highlands ; the soil gradually became less fertile and more arid ; I saw no clear streams running down tree-shaded gullies, but broad sandy hollows showed where occasionally the torrents rush after heavy rain. Further on I saw all round me the ugly Dead Sea fruit growing, and clumps of Dom palms to remind me that I was once again nearing the dreary Sudan. It was a parched land, dotted with the thorny acacia of thirsty regions, whose shape is like an inverted cone with branches extended wide all round the low trunk, supporting the broad flat roof of foliage, so fashioned as to secure as much as possible of the dews and scanty rain. Wild creatures abounded in this wilderness ; I saw numbers of gazelles, ariel, guinea-fowl and wild cattle, and though lions were becoming scarce, giraffes, hyenas and leopards were plentiful, while elephants and ostriches were to be found in the plains.

On December 3 I set out on my final march, but I had not gone far before there scampered up to me a dozen native soldiers mounted on mules whom the Governor had sent to escort me into Kassala. The aspect of the country now became more that of the desert. There was a mountain towards which we were riding rising out of the sandy plain, which struck me for its fantastic and weird appearance, and for its remarkable likeness to the desert island of Trinidad in the South Atlantic, whose shape is familiar to those who have sailed round Cape Horn. Apparently not a blade of grass grew upon this rugged mass. It sprung abruptly from the parched plain in inaccessible peaks and precipices, and was cloven by profound chasms. At its foot was the great mosque of Katmia, the holiest place in the Sudan, frequented by many of the faithful from far countries, containing the tomb of the Morgani saint. The Morgani family, descendants of the prophet, came from Persia and were the first missionaries of Islam to the Sudan. The iconoclastic Dervishes have done their best to destroy this strongly-built holy place, which extends over a considerable area.

The Katmia is a large and beautiful building, which was designed by an able architect, and cost a large sum. The graceful minaret still stands, but the Dervishes had hewn through the base of several of the columns supporting the edifice, so that the roof and many of the shapely arches within the cloistered mosque had fallen in. The ornamental copper work lay broken and twisted on the ground. So the Katmia stood roofless, with floor overgrown with jungle, a picturesque ruin amid this wild scenery, its chambers haunted nightly by the jackals and hyenas. Hard by the Katmia, amid what is now a waste of high halfa grass and bush, were to be seen the ruins of many houses. These were the villas of the wealthier citizens of Kassala, who here had pleasant gardens and shady groves, to which they used to repair during the summer heat. With the passing of the Dervish menace the present representative of the Morgani, who had long been an exile in Egypt, returned in triumph to the Katmia. I met him and, as will be seen later, he was able to be of great service to me.

CHAPTER XXVI

A land of perpetual war.—The fortress of Kassala.—The ruined city.—Capture of El Fasher and Osobri.—Arab fantasia.—Arrival of the Egyptian troops.—Cession of Kassala.—The Morgani Sheikh arrives.—I borrow rifles from him.—I ride to Suakin.

WE rode over the plain, in places strewn with human bones, the relics of the recent battles with the Dervishes, entered the fort and I reported myself to the major in command of the station. A *tokul* was assigned to me to sleep in, and I was made a member of the officers' mess. It was but three years before this that the Italians had occupied Kassala, and since then there had been almost perpetual fighting here, and the menace of the Dervish raids was ever present. Due west of it and only three hundred miles distant was Khartoum, and the Dervish outposts were within sixty miles of Kassala. To the south, hard by, was the frontier of Italy's recent foe and still very doubtful friend, Abyssinia. In the previous February, a Dervish force ten thousand strong appeared before Kassala. The Italian military authorities had renewed the cultivation of the long-abandoned country in the vicinity of the fort. It was the object of the Dervishes to gather in this crop and to carry it off to Omdurman. Emboldened by the news of Italy's terrible disaster at Adowa, they completely invested Kassala with a regular circle of trenches. Reinforcements came up and the Italians, though greatly outnumbered, in the battle of Mount Mokram, signally defeated the enemy and drove him back into the desert. A few weeks before my arrival, raiding parties of Dervishes had advanced as far as Agordat. The Abyssinians too, hearing that an Anglo-Egyptian force was about to occupy Kassala, were greatly disturbed and alarmed, and the mobilization of their troops had been ordered. At that time the position of the young colony was very precarious, and the arrival of the Egyptian troops most opportune.

The fort of Kassala was a strong place—as it might well be—and could be held by a small force against any

Dervish attack. It enclosed an extensive building, once a cotton factory, which had been established in the days of the Egyptians. The Dervishes had destroyed the machinery, but had spared the building, which they had converted into their Beit-el-Mal, or public store. The capacious engine room and other chambers were now used for the armoury, the officers' mess-room and other military purposes, while some of the boiler plates had been utilized in the construction of the fort drawbridge. The stout walls of the fort, eleven feet in height, were surrounded by a deep moat and thick wire entanglements. The garrison of native troops was sufficient for all purposes and eighteen Italian officers mustered at the pleasant mess. The river Gosh, a tributary of the Atbara, flows by Kassala. Its sandy bed is dry for the greater part of the year, but water can always be found by digging in the sand. The plain, for many miles around Kassala, is very fertile. In the peaceful days before the Mahdist revolt, this rich alluvial soil, yearly restored by the detritus washed down by the flooded Gosh, was under cultivation, producing large crops of cotton, sugar, tobacco, coffee and *dhurra*.

But now there was no cultivation; the perpetual menace of Dervish raids had converted what had once been a garden into a wilderness. As I rode across the plain I saw disused dams stretching for miles. In the old days there were upwards of a thousand wells here, from which water was drawn up by means of the *shaduf* to irrigate large tracts. The remains of irrigation canals were to be seen everywhere. The people of Africa set a high value upon this rich plain, for the possession of which they have so often fiercely fought. In 1894 the Italians wrested Kassala from the Dervishes and since then there had been continual warfare here. The Italians endeavoured to resume the cultivation in a few places, but at harvest time the Dervishes swarmed down like locusts on the land to carry off the grain, and after the disaster of Adowa and the reduction of the garrison here, the Italian Government decided to forbid all cultivation in the Kassala district, so that there should be no ripened crops to tempt the raiding bands. So now there lay under the blue Sudanese sky this flat plain, all untilled, strewn

with the bones of the slain in many battles, but abandoned by the living.

Of what was once the town of Kassala little remained but ruins. Here, as at Berber and Dongola and elsewhere in the lost Egyptian provinces, the followers of the Mahdi destroyed all they could, leaving behind them of what was once a prosperous city of forty thousand inhabitants only ruined walls and deserted jungle-overgrown streets, strewn with the bones of the massacred citizens and garrison. At night lions and hyenas prowled through the streets, and there were still more dangerous visitants than they. For when Kassala's population was destroyed there were left behind numbers of the dogs that had belonged to the inhabitants. The descendants of these had reverted to the wild state, and had become dangerous beasts of prey, hunting in great packs. They dwelt no one knew where, and were never seen in the daylight. But if one wandered about after dark, one was apt to encounter a band of hundreds of howling animals rushing wildly across the country, hunger-maddened.

The formal cession of Kassala to the Egyptian Government was to take place on December 25. But on the 18th, Colonel Parsons (now Major-General Sir Charles Parsons) arrived here to settle the numerous details of the convention—the taking over of native troops in the Italian service by the Egyptian Government, the Customs, Telegraph and Postal dispositions, the purchase of Italian munitions and stores and so forth. As there was now small chance of Dervish raids on Kassala, Colonel Parsons announced that he was about to permit the cultivation of land in the neighbourhood. The Egyptian battalion that was marching on Kassala had brought with it a large quantity of various seeds. Not many months elapsed before the irrigation canals were working, the dams that enclosed the waters of the flooded Gosh were repaired, and the rich plain was returning its abundant two-fold crops as of old. And now the plain of Kassala has become one of the most productive cotton growing regions of the world.

At this time spies who were acting independently, but whose statements corresponded, informed us that there was small chance of the Mahdists acting on the offensive

on the Nile. The Khalifa had declared his intention of concentrating his forces at Omdurman. There, he assured his followers, the entire Anglo-Egyptian Army was doomed to be destroyed by the faithful. He had gazed upon the great battle and the slaughter of the enemies of God in one of his usual heaven-sent visions—visions that had so frequently been falsified that assuredly no man could now believe in them. However this might be, it was certain that the Mahdists were still holding posts in the Eastern Sudan within sixty miles of Kassala, and also across the caravan route to Abyssinia, which were a menace to the Italian colony, and from which the Dervish raids used to be made. It was known that the garrisons of these posts had been much reduced of late, and it was also beyond doubt that we had before us at Omdurman a vast Dervish force, short of food, at bay.

Colonel Parsons began to exemplify the Anglo-Saxon energy from the moment he arrived at Kassala. He promptly took over the six hundred odd regulars and irregulars of the Italian native garrison, who had volunteered to come under us, and within twenty-four hours of doing so he astonished everyone here by suddenly and quite unexpectedly hurling this little force against the above-mentioned Dervish posts on the Atbara. Without having given any previous notice of his intention he summoned to parade his newly-recruited men, who still wore the uniform of the Italian native army, and ordered the chiefs on the spot to march to the Atbara and attack El Fasher and Osobri. The chief Aroda was to advance on El Fasher with four hundred men. Aroda was formerly a very energetic leader of Dervish cavalry in Osman Digna's army, and had given us a great deal of trouble, but had abjured Mahdism and as a leader of the *banda* had greatly distinguished himself under the Italian flag. At the same time Assabala, another once-Dervish leader of distinction, was instructed to attack Osobri.

The Colonel's words produced an almost magical effect. With the Arabs the fantasia must precede the fight. So soon as the men heard these wholly unexpected but, to them, exceedingly welcome orders, there was a scene of the most extraordinary excitement. In a

moment, and of their own accord, the whole six hundred fell out of the ranks and rushed off at full speed, shouting, brandishing their rifles, and leaping, towards their huts ; and there, as is their custom before going into battle, they donned the amulets that heighten courage and bring good fortune in war, the armlets and necklaces of their wives, and gave farewell embraces to those dusky dames, whose excitement was as great as their own, for throughout all the hut-encampment now rose the shrill luluing of the women and the din of beating tomtoms. But the men wasted little time in these traditional observances. Even as they had rushed off, so did they soon hurry back and were again drawn up before Colonel Parsons, ready for the march and eager for the fight and the looting of cattle which would be the reward of victory.

It was expected that they would be away about five or six days ; but their commissariat arrangements were very simple ; they had with them a few camels to carry skins of water and a little flour. They had no baggage of any sort ; bare-footed and clad in a scanty robe, each man carried with him nothing but his rifle and ammunition, and was prepared to march from one end of the Sudan to the other. Sons of the most warlike tribes of the African Arabs—Hadendoa, Beni Amer and others—these savage warriors presented a splendid appearance as they stood there drawn up, awaiting the final order that should let them loose, moving restlessly, a murmur passing through their ranks, like hounds with the prey in sight, still held back by the leash ; while their proud chiefs, clad in their picturesque flowing robes of various colours, rode up and down the line on their prancing horses. A little distance off stood all the women, still luluing, clapping their hands, and encouraging their husbands with brave words. At last the short quick word of command was given, the bugle sounded, and they were off, a sixteen hours' march between them and their foe. It was a spectacle such as one seldom has the fortune to behold. The sun was just setting, a red disc on the edge of the broad plain. As the bugle sounded the chiefs waved their swords and spurred their horses, the men gave a yell, and in a body broke into a quick run, brandishing their rifles, leaping and cheering as

before, and rushed towards the setting sun, soon to disappear in the clouds of dust they raised. So long as they were in sight the women lulued and the tomtoms beat. It was indeed a fine setting out for battle. I think that had even the meekest of our pacifists been present the contagion of that excitement would have found out in him, and made to tingle, some hidden unsuspected fibre of the old barbarian.

On December 22 the Egyptian infantry regiment and artillery that had been landed at Massowah, having marched up the three hundred miles that I had followed, arrived at Kassala. I was told that the soldiers expressed great astonishment when they neared the mountain range, for being men of the plains they had never seen such heights before, and they asked their officers with some dismay whether they had to climb right over the clouds in order to reach Kassala. The troops marched across the plain in column of route, the band playing Italian airs. Outside the fort they were met by Major de Bernardis, the Governor of Kassala, and some of his officers, with a guard of honour of native infantry. A salute of twenty-one guns was fired from the fort, and the Egyptian flag was hoisted on the walls to fly by the side of the Italian.

The battalion was now formed in line and received the Governor with a general salute. As the line of Egyptians fronted that of the guard of honour during this ceremony, one was struck by the great contrast presented by the soldiers of these two races, both very useful fighting material in their several ways, but totally unlike each other in almost every other respect. On one side stood the brown Egyptians, tall, of very fine physique, slow and stolid, accoutred like European troops, highly disciplined, submissive, maintaining an absolute silence, and holding themselves so rigidly that on looking down their ranks one could not detect the slightest motion of a limb, until the word of command was given and they presented arms as one man. On the other side were the native troops of Italy, of far darker complexion than the Egyptians of lesser stature, of slight build, active, restless, high spirited and vivacious, barefooted and in loose native dress, not trammelled by a rigid discipline, but

bearing themselves with an easy grace. Of the two bodies of men, one was the civilized war machine, the other the free-lance band of born warriors.

On December 23 messengers came in from El Fasher and Osobri to announce that the two surprise attacks had been wholly successful. El Fasher had fallen, and the Dervishes had been defeated at Osobri, but many Dervish riflemen were still holding the fort. Assabala asked for more flour and ammunition to enable him to continue the investment. Among the killed at El Fasher were three well-known Baggara Emirs, whose bullet-pierced and blood-stained *jibbahs* were brought into Kassala by the messenger.

The formal cession of Kassala was effected on Christmas Day. At noon, under a cloudless sky, were drawn up on one side of the entrance to the fort the Egyptian battalion in line, on the other side the small Italian garrison and such of the native infantry as we had not taken over. The entire native population—Arabs, Sudanese, Somalis, Abyssinians—looked on quietly as if wondering what it all signified. The general hush was most remarkable at the moment when Colonel Parsons, riding between the two lines, saluted Colonel Sanminiattelli, and, speaking in Arabic, requested permission to enter Kassala with his troops. The Colonel replied in Italian:

"Excellency, I am ordered by my Government to cede to you the fortress and territory of Kassala."

The Italian officers who were present were visibly affected.

"It is a bitter thing for us," they put it to me, "thus to be compelled to abandon the country we conquered, the graves of our dead comrades, the native troops we have trained and so often led to victory."

They said that in all the unhappy business there was but one consoling circumstance—it was not an enemy of Italy that had acquired what the Italian Government had thrown away. It was painful to us Englishmen present to see our friends, the Italian officers, with the small Italian column, leave the fort, on which the Egyptian flag had just been hoisted, to march eastward over the sun-scorched plain to beyond the new frontier, while the guns that had been theirs but that morning, now served

by Egyptian artillerymen, thundered a salute from the fort.

On December 29, messengers arrived to announce that Osobri had fallen after a six days' siege and desperate fighting. The Dervishes, who had constructed at Osobri what they imagined to be an impregnable fort, had made this their principal post on the Atbara, from which the other posts were fed. There is abundance of good pasture in the neighbourhood and water is plentiful, so here they had for some time kept a large number of cattle, while they cultivated *dhurra* in the neighbourhood. This post, therefore, was invaluable as an advanced base for a force marching from Khartoum to attack the Italian frontier. It was the object of Colonel Parsons not merely to capture Osobri, but to take the Dervishes completely by surprise and so secure the whole of their cattle and their stores of *dhurra*—a misfortune which the Khalifa would take more to heart than the slaughter of a garrison and the loss of a little fort. Assabala, a born robber and skilful leader of forays, succeeded in capturing everything the enemy possessed there. His men ate a number of the animals and possibly sent many more to their friends, but they brought back to Kassala and delivered to Colonel Parsons five hundred sheep and goats, thirty camels, seventy oxen and thirty donkeys. A quantity of grain and gunpowder and some rifles were also captured.

On the morning of December 31, Assabala and Aroda, with their wild followers, came back to Kassala. Above them waved captured Dervish banners, while one man on a camel energetically beat the large kettledrum of the Baggara Emir who had defended Osobri. They entered Kassala with the customary fantasia of victors returning home. It was a wilder manifestation of barbaric triumph than that which accompanied their departure. The din was awful, and the wives, who came out in a body to greet their warriors, raised an uncanny shrill luluing. That evening there was a great feast in the camp when much meat was eaten and a good deal of *marissa* (*dhurra* beer) was drunk, for these Arabs, though Mussulmans, are not teetotallers. On the following day the wives of these savage warriors performed the

fantasia of death, a weird rite in honour of those who had fallen in the fight; and after that they went through the fantasia of victory, a far more savage performance than the first, demonstrating what they would do to the prisoners, if there were any.

And now I got a cablegram from *The Times* telling me to go back to Berber. Berber was only two hundred and fifty miles across the desert by the old caravan track, but I was not permitted to follow that route, as the Dervishes were holding posts on the road. My only road led through Suakin, which involved a six hundred miles' ride on camels. There is a caravan route from Kassala to Suakin down the Khor Barraka, a distance of three hundred miles, which had not been used by us for many years, as its frequent wells tempted the Dervish bands to visit it.

I asked Colonel Parsons for permission to travel to Suakin by that route. He could not undertake the responsibility of granting me this, but telegraphed to the Sirdar for instructions. The Sirdar replied that I could not follow that road unless I was accompanied by an armed escort of at least fifteen men, as Dervish patrols were still in the neighbourhood, watching Kassala. I have never discovered whether Kitchener intended this as a jest, for of course it was quite impossible for me to take an escort of soldiers from the garrison of Kassala; and, if I could find men to come with me, how was I to arm them? The Government could not lend me rifles; the Arabs, with the exception of those who served in the irregular forces, were not permitted to own firearms. Colonel Parsons was prepared to assist me in every way, but thought that it would be impossible for me to fulfil the conditions.

Had I been compelled to travel by way of Massowah, I should have had to make a journey of nearly three thousand miles in order to reach Berber; no regular steamers ran between Massowah and Suakin, and at that season the winds are contrary for a dhow undertaking the voyage, so that I should have had to take steamer to Suez and travel up the Nile valley to Berber, a journey which, I had learnt from former experience, was attended with frequent and lengthy delays when military

transport blocked the way. So I determined to find some means of travelling to Suakin by road.

To make up my "little army"—as Abdul was pleased to call it—I had perforce to raise volunteers in the Kassala market place, a recruiting ground of masterless rascals and outcasts from their tribes. I had plenty of volunteers, but they were certainly an unprepossessing lot and were in fact the off-scouring of the population, dissolute vagabonds of various breeds, Sudanese, Somalis, Abyssinians, a Turk (an ex-bashi-bazouk of the Sultan) and others. I appointed one gigantic Sudanese black as sheikh of the escort, because he was not only of fine physique, but was the only one of them of whom anything was known, and he had the vestige of a character, that is, he had once been employed in some capacity or other by a European, and had been discharged for drunkenness after a month's service. I selected the most likely of the men, who were afterwards paraded in the market place. They formed as disreputable-looking a company as I had ever set eyes on, and recalled to mind that ragged contingent which Sir John Falstaff raised for the French wars.

I was about to complete my agreement with these men when a sheikh of the Halenga and a sheikh of the Hadendoa, who happened to be in Kassala, hearing of my requirements, offered to make up my full complement of men between them, and supply me with the required number of camels. I gladly availed myself of their offer, which provided me with good men instead of my riff-raff of the market place. But the next question which arose was how I was to arm them.

But my luck did not desert me. On January 5, having travelled by the very road I wished to follow, there arrived at Kassala, Sidi Ali, the Morgani sheikh. I have already described the handsome fane of the Katmia, half destroyed by the Dervishes, outside Kassala. Colonel Parsons had announced that the Government would now restore its former glory to the Katmia, and had prepared to bring back Sidi Ali with great state to Kassala, the home of his fathers, from which the Mahdist revolt had caused him to flee. Sidi Ali had left Suakin with one hundred men, but many others joined him as he passed

through the Tokar district, and he came in with a following of nearly five hundred, mounted on camels, horses and donkeys. Sidi Ali was a young man of twenty-five, of very pleasing expression. Hundreds of Sudanese and Arabs, mounted and on foot, went out of Kassala to meet and escort in the revered head of the saintly Morgani family, who was riding on a big white camel. The drums beat, the religious cries were raised and the Arab sheikhs galloped to and fro and round the advancing procession. Colonel Parsons, with a guard of Arab soldiers, met Sidi Ali at about two miles from the fort, and, shaking hands with him, welcomed him back to the home of his fathers, from which he had been exiled for fifteen years. The Arabs and blacks then pressed round their young spiritual chief, each eager to kiss his hand or the hem of his robe. He waved them off quietly and said in a gentle voice :

" *Ba-adain* " (by-and-bye).

In a moment, at his word, the crowd fell back obedient. His influence could scarcely be over-estimated. The whole population of the Eastern Sudan would take up arms at his bidding. This lineal descendant of Mohammed was now to reside within the precincts of the Katmia, the mosque which contains the tombs of his ancestors. Kassala was once more to be the Holy City of this portion of Africa, and thousands of pilgrims would repair here yearly.

Now I noticed that a good many of Sidi Ali's following were armed with rifles, and on these of course I set covetous eyes. I learnt that he had been permitted to arm his bodyguard with fifty Remingtons. Here was my only chance, so I sought an interview with the Morgani sheikh, explained the circumstances, and at last prevailed upon him to lend me the necessary number of rifles and twenty rounds of ammunition for each. I armed my men with the rifles, and they also carried swords or spears and shields, and, glad indeed that I had attained my end, I set out with my band of Arabs on January 9. I was entrusted with the first mail sent from Kassala to Suakin, and with despatches for the Sirdar.

Having sent my heavy baggage to Cairo and left most of my remaining belongings at Massowah, I was travelling

very light. One camel could have carried myself, my baggage and stores. I had little beside the blanket which lay on my saddle, which barely sufficed to protect me from the cold, for at this season the keen north wind sweeps almost unceasingly across these exposed plateaux, while near the coast the air is damp, so that one's bivouac is generally a chilly one. But though my camels were so lightly laden, the journey of three hundred miles occupied ten days, and it was only by hard driving that this was accomplished, for the animals had been underfed, had just completed a long journey, and had been allowed no rest before they set out again with me. I had no *dhurra* with me for the camels, for there was a great scarcity of this grain at Kassala, and I had only sufficient with me for the men's rations. So we had to rely on grazing only for the animals. This meant frequent halts at places where pasture was good, constant loadings and unloadings. And it meant too the breaking up of the day and night into frequent short stages and halts, so that one never got more than two or three hours' rest at a time.

One night, as my Arabs were crouching and gossiping round their bivouac fire I heard them ask wonderingly of Abdul why I was in such a great hurry. He replied: "He wishes to get to the Nile in time for the great battle."

They at once understood and appreciated my reasons, for though to be in haste over any other matter appeared incomprehensible folly to these leisurely Bedouin, they quite felt that it would not do at all to come in too late at a fight.

The Arabs of the Eastern Sudan, who, notably the Hadendoa, are the Fuzzy-Wuzzies of our old wars, so graphically described by Rudyard Kipling, are very good fellows. Indeed, I have never travelled with pleasanter companions. Our former gallant foes are manly, independent, brave and honest, and always cheery—in every way far superior to the degenerate Arabs of the Nile valley. I got on very well with them and found them very intelligent. Colonel Parsons had asked me to make a route map of this track, with notes about the supply of water in the wells and so forth, for the last European

who had travelled along it was Dr. Junker, who came this way in 1877. While I was drawing out this map during a halt, my bushy-headed Fuzzy-Wuzzies used to crowd round me and make comments which showed that they quite understood what I was doing. When I pointed to two spots on the map, and said, " That is the well at which we halted yesterday, and that is where we are now," they would point to blank parts of the map and say, " And that is Khartoum," or Berber, or what not, and I perceived that their distances and bearings were wonderfully correct.

I found that several of them had but recently fought against us in the Dervish ranks under Osman Digna. As we rode on my men took proper precautions against surprise by the enemy, for they knew that small parties of Dervishes were in the neighbourhood. One party of ten of the enemy's horsemen was a few miles to the east of Kassala when we set out, and Hadendoa we met on the way told us that they had seen others among the hills bordering our road. However, we saw no Dervishes, and I have no adventure by the way to recount.

We met only four or five people for the first two hundred miles of this journey—Hadendoa shepherds from the hills who had brought down their flocks of goats to graze. Whenever we sighted a human being in the distance our camels were halted and a scout was sent in front on foot, who crept through the bush or scaled a height so as to reconnoitre, and we did not advance until he signalled that all was well. On this road one sees in every stranger a possible enemy, and the Hadendoa shepherds, on their part, used generally to run into the bush when they saw us approach, for we were a party of decidedly suspicious appearance, and looked far more like Dervishes than respectable travellers. I was astonished at the richness of the country between Kassala and Tokar. I found good pasture, water and fuel nearly everywhere. It was a country inhabited by wild beasts only. I saw guinea-fowl, ariel, gazelles, and koodoo in great quantities, wild boar and wild donkeys ; also many recent tracks of lions and leopards. It is said that elephants were to be found in the Khor Barraka, but I did not come across their spoor.

When we were about half way an incident occurred which might easily have led to serious trouble. We were riding down a bend of the *khor* and could not see what was ahead, when one of our scouts ran back to us and shouted something to the others. Of one accord the men broke into a fantasia, waved their rifles, yelled, and charged helter-skelter down the *khor*. I was riding a little ahead of the others and urged my camel to keep in front of them, so that I might see what it was that so excited them. We turned the bend in the *khor*, and there drawn up across the road was a detachment of the Egyptian camel corps, with their rifles aimed at us. I waved my arm and rode down to them. A young British officer who was in command of the detachment said :

" Who are you ? We were just going to fire. We took you for Dervishes."

He stared at my Fuzzy-Wuzzies, who crowded up and began to fraternize cheerily with the camel corps men, and he evidently wondered to see me travelling alone with these wild people. I explained matters. We had a glass of whisky together and then we separated, he to proceed to Kassala and I to Suakin. He told me that he had but just arrived in Egypt, and had been sent with the detachment of the camel corps to reinforce Kassala. Had the Egyptians fired into us—as they nearly did—and wounded some of my wild Arabs, what the latter would have done (and there would be no stopping them) can easily be guessed. It would have been awkward for me when I got to Suakin to have had to report that my friends had cut up a detachment of the camel corps. The Sirdar, justly, might have been somewhat annoyed.

My Arabs, hearing that I was going to Berber to be present at what Abdul called the great battle, to a man offered to come with me. A two days' rest at Suakin they said, would completely restore the camels, and then they would be able to go anywhere. We reached Tokar on January 17. The fort was then held by two companies of the 5th battalion under an Egyptian colonel, Abdel-gawad Bey, who received me with great hospitality, and lent me his own fast camel wherewith to ride to Suakin. Accompanied by an Arab, I rode the fifty-six miles into

Suakin at a trot, leaving Abdul and my Arabs to follow. We reached Suakin in the night after the gates were closed, so we had to lie down on the sand and sleep till dawn, when the gates were opened to admit us.

And now I found to my dismay that the route to Berber down which I had ridden a few months before, was again closed to travellers. A caravan that was starting from Angelo's had been stopped by the commandant. The Dervishes were again across the road. I spent a week cabling to the Sirdar and to *The Times*, but all in vain. I pointed out to the Sirdar that I had an escort of good Arabs with me, who would be a match for any small Dervish patrol. Several English traders had come to Suakin with the intention of forwarding goods by the caravan route to Berber, and they, too, were held up. The Sirdar was obdurate, and no doubt rightly so, for as we heard later, bodies of Dervishes were holding the wells on the road. So at last *The Times* cabled me to return home. Abdul and my Arabs were very disappointed when I communicated this news to them. So I took the little steamer to Suez and thence sailed to England.

CHAPTER XXVII

The Spanish-American war.—The American blockade of Havana.—Go to Key West.—Authorities there forbid me to go to Cuba.—I run the blockade but have to return to Key West.—I run the blockade again.—Off Cuba in a capsized boat.—I am taken prisoner.

I GOT to London in the spring of 1898. The time was approaching when Sir Herbert Kitchener was to undertake his third and last summer advance up the Nile—the campaign which in September was to culminate in the battle of Omdurman. I was looking forward to joining the expedition, but *The Times* willed otherwise; and in the beginning of May sent me to Cuba to attach myself to the Spanish Army in the war that had just broken out between Spain and the United States. The fact that I spoke a little Spanish, and that I was the only English correspondent to whom the authorities in Madrid would grant permission to go to Cuba had induced *The Times* to seize the opportunity of being the one English paper that had a representative on the Spanish side in the island.

At that time Admiral Sampson, with a considerable number of warships, was closely blockading Havana and the neighbouring coast. But neutral merchant vessels that had sailed from Europe before the proclamation of the blockade had the right to pass through the blockading squadron and enter Havana, provided that they first called at Key West to be searched for contraband of war, and to obtain their clearance. So to Key West I decided to go and intercept one of these neutral vessels. From New York I first went to Washington to see the American Naval Authorities. There I was fortunate enough to find Roosevelt, the Secretary of the Navy. The genial statesman was then organizing his cow-boy brigade, and each recruit passed before him and received advice and a few kindly words. He, without raising any difficulty, gave me papers which authorized me to take passage to Cuba on any neutral vessel, and also a letter to Commodore Remy, then commandant at Key West.

I went to Tampa, where I had to wait a day or two for a steamer to convey me to Key West; for that island was not then connected with the mainland by a causeway and railway, as I believe it is now. At Tampa the American troops were concentrating, but while there I carefully avoided the acceptance of any invitations to the camps, so that when I reached Cuba I could truthfully reply to enquirers that I knew nothing of the American dispositions.

I then went to Key West and there passed nearly a fortnight in vain attempts to reach Havana. When I saw Commodore Remy he said:

"I cannot let you go to Havana. You have seen our dispositions both at Tampa and here at Key West."

So I telegraphed to Washington and received a reply from the Secretary of the Navy which informed me that I had permission to take passage on the German steamer *Polario*, which was to call at Key West on her way to Havana, and that the Key West authorities had been instructed on the subject. This seemed plain enough but when the *Polario* entered Key West, Commodore (now Admiral Remy), to my amazement, informed me that he would not permit me to go to Havana on that vessel, that I had permission to *take passage* only, and not to *land*, and that unless he (Commodore Remy) gave his consent, the captain could not land passengers in Havana, without incurring a very heavy penalty; he had executed a bond to that effect. It was in vain that I argued the point. When I asked him whether it was not clear that the Secretary of the Navy, when he gave me permission to take *passage* to a place, had it in his mind that I should *land* at that place, the Commodore replied that it was not his business to guess what was in the Secretary's mind, but to follow the letter of his instructions; it was quite possible, he said, that the Secretary did not intend me to go to Havana, and had purposely omitted to give me permission to *land*.

"They are too polite in Washington," he explained, "to refuse outright, and often do things after this fashion."

The Commodore's argument was silenced by a telegram from the Secretary which arrived in reply to one of mine. This definitely gave me permission to land as

well as to take passage. But the Commodore had his way after all. The destination of the *Polario* was altered and she sailed for New York instead of to Havana, in consequence of certain vexatious restrictions imposed at the last moment by the United States Government. Other neutral vessels came in bound for Havana and other Cuban ports; but the captains of these, when I approached them, said they would not take me as a passenger; they would not even allow me to board their vessels. One skipper, an Englishman, let the cat out of the bag. The Key West authorities had frightened him with their warnings as to the risks he would run were he to carry passengers to Cuba; and being an ignorant and timid person, he feared lest he might be breaking some international law, and become responsible for another Alabama claim were he to have any dealings with me.

I began to realize that I should not attain my end without some difficulty, as the local authorities at Key West cared little for the instructions they had received from the Washington Government, and were determined to prevent me from going to Havana. So I had to fall back on duplicity. While I continued to call at the Commodore's office—to worry him till he became impatient—to insist on telegrams being sent to Washington—I had, as a matter of fact, abandoned all hope of embarking on a neutral vessel, and did these things to put him off the scent while I was secretly searching for some contraband method of escaping to Cuba. In little inns I conferred with the masters of certain British schooners that were in the harbour, hailing from the Bahamas and West Indian ports. But here, too, again, I found timid skippers, whom nothing could persuade to drop me in a boat off the Cuban coast at night, an enterprise in which they would have incurred little risk.

Then I sounded certain disreputable natives of Key West, who were not afraid to run the blockade with their little sloops, the craft they employed in carrying on their trades of smuggling, sponge-poaching, and filibustering, having sails of a very dark colour, so as to be invisible by night. The crews of these demanded impossible sums for smuggling me across and wished to be paid in advance.

They were a rough lot and I much doubt whether they would ever have taken me to Cuba had I entrusted myself to them.

But luck favoured me. I had made the acquaintance of a very plucky and enterprising American journalist named Scovell. He was a correspondent of the *New York World*, which paper had supplied him with a small tug, with which he used to cruise in the channel between Cuba and Key West, with the object of picking up what news he could from the blockading squadron. He had been fortunate in witnessing the bombardment of a Cuban coast town by torpedo boats, and had interesting tales to tell of the little vessels that landed guns for the use of the Cuban rebels on unfrequented portions of the coast.

A colleague of his had been captured by the Spaniards, and was now a prisoner in the Cabaña fortress in Havana. Scovell proposed to steam into Havana in his tug under a flag of truce and negotiate for the life of his colleague, for the latter lay under the suspicion of being a spy, and it was reported that he was about to be shot. I believe that Scovell had no official authority to undertake this mission. He offered to take me with him, and told me that the tug would sail on the following night. At the appointed hour, therefore, I slipped away from the hotel, which was crowded with naval and military officers and correspondents, and walked down to the deserted quay alongside of which the tug was lying. I went below till we had got clear of the harbour; for the searchlights were all directed on her decks as she steamed by, and again the next morning when we came to the blockading squadron and had a long palaver with Sampson's flag ship.

Then we proceeded, steamed into the mouth of Havana Harbour, and prepared to hoist our white flag as a sign of our amiable intentions. The saloon tablecloth was the only substitute for a white flag that could be found and an Irish sailor was ordered to hoist it on our mast. He swore volubly, turned scarlet with rage, and refused to touch it.

"No Irishman in all history," he said, "had ever displayed a white flag in face of an enemy."

So Scovell was obliged to hoist the tablecloth with his own hands.

We hove to at the entrance of the spacious harbour, and soon some Spanish naval officers came off to us in a patrol boat. They boarded us, and Scovell told his story. They asked him for his credentials; he replied that he had none, and the punctilious Spanish captain smiled at the casual methods of the Yankees. Then I told them my story and produced my papers. They then ordered all on board the *Uncas*, for that was the name of the tug, with the exception of myself, to go below, so that they should not observe the defences of Havana. The Spanish sailors then took the tug past quay sides crowded with wondering people, to the arsenal steps, when some of the officers went on shore, taking our papers with them, to explain our errands to the authorities.

After a long absence they returned and told us General Blanco's decision. He could not parley with Scovell, as my friend was unprovided with any form of authority to act as an envoy, but we were assured that the prisoner in the Cabaña was still alive, and certainly would not be shot for some time, that is, until he had been found guilty of espionage after a fair trial. As for myself, I could not possibly be permitted to land from an enemy ship. I must return to Key West and return to Havana in a neutral vessel.

Then the Spaniards took the *Uncas* out to sea again, and when we were clear of the harbour left us to return to Key West.

It was a great disappointment to me. I do not know if a report of my adventure reached Commodore Remy's ears. I know that the crew of the *Uncas* had been ordered to hold their tongues, and when I landed at Key West as unostentatiously as I had embarked, I found that no one knew that I had actually been in Havana Harbour but, forbidden to land, had perforce to return to Key West and try again. I was determined to get to Havana in some way or other despite Commodore Remy and the blockading squadron. In short, the getting to Cuba became an *idée fixe* with me. I used to dream at night that I had landed there, and wake in the morning bitterly

disappointed to find myself in bed in the Key West Hotel.

I proposed to Scovell that if I could procure a small boat it could be placed on the deck of the tug, and that I could be lowered with her somewhere off the coast of Cuba and left to find my way to Havana as best I could. Scovell agreed to the scheme, so while I still worried Commodore Remy with regard to my taking passage on neutral vessels, I diligently but unostentatiously ransacked the seafaring waterside of Key West to find a boat that would suit me. At last I found a sort of a home-made boat, and badly made at that. She was about eleven feet long, broad but very shallow, with very little freeboard, and flat bottom. She was shaped like an upper Thames punt, or a photographic developing tray. She was what was locally known as a canoe, and was much like the canoe in which some years before I had paddled down the west coast of Florida inside the Keys. She was anything but the sort of craft that I should have selected for rough water, but there was no choice of boats, so I bought her and got her late owner to row her down to the *Uncas*, which was then in port, and place her on board.

I met Scovell that day in the corridor of the hotel and he said two words to me as he passed: "To-night, twelve." So I made my preparations. I called for the last time on Commodore Remy and found him more impatient than ever. "It is no good your coming to see me. You cannot go to Cuba from here," he said. I told him that this was the last time I should call upon him, at which he seemed somewhat relieved. I had dinner that night at the hotel and afterwards sat in the great smoking room to take my coffee and liqueur. The room was crowded with naval officers and journalists. They all knew that I had been sent here to proceed to Cuba. "You will never get through Sampson's blockade," said the naval officers. "Give it up," said the journalists; "You had better go back to England and start afresh." Then they offered to bet with me and gave me fairly long odds that I would not be in Cuba within a month. I took the bets but have never yet collected my winnings. At eleven o'clock I bade them

all good-night, and strolled off as if to go to bed. But having supplied myself with such necessaries as I required, I went out at the back of the hotel, followed deserted alleys to the quay, got on board the *Uncas* unseen by any inquisitive people and stowed myself away in Scovell's cabin until the *Uncas* was well out on the high seas.

At midnight we steamed out of the harbour, reported ourselves to the blockading squadron the next morning, and at about one p.m. were about six miles off the Cuban coast and twelve miles to the eastward of Havana, no vessel of the blockading squadron being near us. It had been blowing hard for some days, the sea was rough and the little tug tumbled about a good deal during her passage across the one hundred mile broad channel that divides the Florida Keys from the Cuban coast.

We had hoped to find smooth water under the land, but in this we were disappointed. The fresh trade wind blew parallel to the coast, and meeting the opposing Gulf Stream flowing eastward from the Gulf of Mexico, raised a high, choppy sea, and we saw that there was a heavy surf upon the distant beach. I had understood that I should be dropped, under cover of the night, to leeward of some point, or within the mouth of some smooth bay, but to attempt this by daylight would be to draw the fire of the Spanish batteries, and the captain refused to run in closer. The tug had to return at once to Key West ; so it was a question of my going back with her or taking my chance of landing on this exposed and uninhabited strip of coast. But having carefully watched the sea for some time I came to the conclusion that the venture was not too dangerous, and with Cuba now so near, I was very loth to return to the United States. I probably should never get such a chance again.

The tug therefore stopped, my boat was lowered over the lee side, but was at once half filled with water by a sea, and had to be baled out. My baggage, some bottles of water, and provisions were placed in her, then I jumped in and pulled off. The crew of the tug, who regarded mine as a very dangerous venture, had so far watched my proceedings in dead silence, but now that I was beginning to row away, they gave me a hearty cheer. The steamer stood by for a while to see that all

went well with me. It had been my intention to row close under the shore towards Havana, to land as soon as I was challenged by Spanish troops, give myself up to the officer in command, and tell my story ; but the sea being so rough, I now decided to effect a landing as quickly as I could.

But I could not row straight into the shore, for that would bring the steep seas on my beam and capsize the boat ; so I had to row parallel to the coast before the wind and edge in towards the land whenever there was a smooth. For some time I got on very well, but I found that I had to exert the greatest care and vigilance to keep the boat dead before each high sea. When I was about a mile from the tug, which was still lying to, I entered a succession of steep and dangerous breakers. A few had rolled safely by me, when I came to one that broke just as I was about to top it ; a volume of water rushed over the boat, filling and then capsizing it. Clinging to the boat with one hand, I held up an oar with the other as a signal of distress to the tug. She immediately began to steam ahead and I took it for granted that she was making for me ; so I looked round to save some of my belongings, but found that my baggage had broken away from its lashings and had disappeared ; my provisions and water bottles too had sunk.

On rising on the summit of a wave I saw that the tug was farther off than before, and then realized, to my dismay, that she was steaming away from me. My friends had evidently not seen my signal, or had mistaken it for an intimation that all was right with me, and that they could safely leave me. Thus left alone, with but small chance of receiving any assistance—for there were no boats of any description on this portion of the coast—I first thought of making an attempt to swim for the shore ; but I saw that the distance was too great, and that it was extremely unlikely I should reach the land even if I escaped the sharks that swarmed in these waters. I therefore decided to remain with the boat and see what I could do with her. Taking advantage of a smooth, I succeeded in righting her ; but I found that it would be impossible to get the water out of her, however smooth the sea, for she had a good deal of sheer and while her

bow and stern rose above the water, her sides were immersed several inches. I tried to roll the water out of her, but in vain. I found that all my property had sunk with the boat's capsize. All I had left were the trousers and jersey which I had on and one oar.

After trying some experiments with her I soon discovered that though the boat was unfit to carry one through a rough sea, she was, in consequence of her breadth and her flat floor, a much safer boat to cling on to when swamped and capsized than a far better sea boat would have been in the same position. She was frequently rolled over by the waves, now floating keel upwards, and now righting herself; but it was always possible for me to lie on one side or the other of her between the capsizings, without fatiguing myself to any extent, though when inside of her I was, of course, up to my shoulders in water, and the waves were constantly passing over my head.

About half an hour after my capsize I saw the mast belonging to the boat floating some distance off. I swam out to it, brought it back and secured it to the thwarts with my pocket handkerchief. I also contrived to make fast my most valuable possession, the one oar. Holding on to the stern, I now swam behind the boat, endeavouring to direct her shorewards, but with no appreciable result. But after a while I saw the fin of a shark approaching me, so promptly resumed my former position on the boat, where my body was not so exposed to view.

I thus drifted on until the evening, when the wind freshened and the sea rose so that the boat's capsizings became more frequent, and the waves dashed over my head more often than before. The sunset was, I think, the most magnificent I had ever seen. The whole heaven was a blaze of gorgeous colour, and I told myself that in all probability this was the last sunset I should see, for my position then seemed perilous in the extreme, and I thought it likely that I should become exhausted and be washed off the boat before the morning. But fortunately for me, the water was quite warm, almost at blood heat I imagine.

The sea went down again in the night, which seemed to me interminable, for the frequent capsizes kept me

occupied, crawling up the side to get inside or on to the bottom of the boat as the case might be. I frequently dozed off for a minute or so while inside the boat, and dreamt of flowing streams of fresh water, only to be suddenly awakened by a capsize, to find myself in the water with the boat on the top of me. To the westward I saw a light in the sky which I knew to be the reflection of Havana's gaslit streets—all I then thought I should ever see of them—and far to the eastward I perceived flashes as from guns, and concluded that a naval engagement was in progress.

To my astonishment I found myself at dawn still clinging to the boat, not much exhausted, but suffering from thirst, for I must have inadvertently swallowed a good deal of sea water. The sea was now much smoother; I was apparently about three miles from the coast which was evidently unpopulated. I had drifted some miles nearer the shore in the night. I now found it possible to sit inside the water-logged boat and by paddling, first on one side, then on the other, with the oar, I directed her towards the shore. But it was hopeless work; after I had been thus toiling—capsizing and getting in again every quarter of an hour or so—for many hours, the green, palm-clad hills, the yellow sands and the fringe of surf seemed as far away as ever.

It must have been about ten o'clock in the morning, when there were signs of a thunderstorm, and with a violent squall the wind shifted to the N.N.E., thus blowing towards the shore, instead of parallel to it as before. Here I saw my chance; my hopes revived and I determined to employ all my strength in a struggle to reach the shore. I sat in the stern end, paddling hard with the oar, I kept the boat before the wind, which, striking her uplifted bows, gave her some way through the water, and I soon discovered that I was making distinct progress. I paddled steadily on for I should say three hours, the capsizing of the boat occurring at intervals. At last I was so near the shore that I could distinguish a mounted soldier watching me, and soon afterwards I saw fifty soldiers drawn up in a line on the beach and an officer with them who signalled to me to land. I recognized the striped blue uniform of the Spanish regulars,

and realized that I had fallen into the hands of a patrol.

My perils were not over yet, for I saw that the beach before me formed a steep rocky wall, on which the surf was breaking furiously, a most dangerous place at which to attempt a landing. But the landing had to be made and I did not hesitate. I was too tormented with thirst to heed the danger then. As a matter of fact I was between the devil and the deep sea ; for as I was informed later on had I not obeyed the officer's orders and made directly for the shore, the soldiers would have been ordered to fire at me.

When I got about forty yards from the shore, I found myself among breakers that rolled my boat over and over so frequently that she was altogether unmanageable. I therefore sprang clear of her and swam for the shore. Three times I came in on the crest of a wave, was battered and bruised by the rocks, and then carried out to sea again by the undertow. But with the fourth wave I succeeded in clinging tightly to a rock, and before the next wave was on me a soldier ran down, gave me a hand, and I scrambled into safety.

Having passed twenty-four hours on my capsized boat, which now broke herself up on the rocks, I stood at last on Cuban soil, having lost everything but the clothes in which I had swum to the shore, with not even a hat to my head or boots to my feet. I told my story briefly to the officer in command and ascertained that I had fallen into the hands of a company of the 4th Battalion of Cazadores, and that the uninhabited strip of coast on which I had landed was called the Plaza de Ferrara. The company was patrolling the coast on the lookout for any craft that was attempting to smuggle munitions to the rebels. They had been ordered to fire at any boat that came near the coast, but had refrained from opening fire on me on seeing that I was a shipwrecked man.

I was, of course, a prisoner. I explained that I had the Spanish Government's permission to land in Cuba. I do not suppose that they believed me ; for I had no papers to show, and had lost all my belongings with the exception of the trousers and jersey in which I stood up.

I am convinced that they thought I was an American spy or a filibuster bound for an insurgent camp. But though they were pretty sure that I should be shot as a Yankee spy on the morrow, both officers and men treated me with the utmost courtesy. The soldiers politely proffered me cigarettes. But what I badly wanted was water, and they had none with them, having exhausted their water bottles. Leaving the coast they marched me inland for about ten miles, hatless and shoeless, by paths leading through dense tropical bush, to the headquarters of their regiment, the little town of Barrera, which had been looted and half burnt down by the Spanish or the insurgents, or both, and had been abandoned by its civil population.

On the way I was closely guarded lest I should make a bolt of it through the jungle to join the insurgents, for a large body of these was known to be in the neighbourhood. It was a desolate road we followed, and we met no one on the way. At Barrera a very savoury stew was prepared for me, but my tongue, throat and mouth were so sore and swollen by thirst and sea water that I could swallow no food or wine, though it was forty hours since I had eaten food. I could only drink water by slow degrees, but it was most delicious to me, for by that time I was sorely in need of it.

CHAPTER XXVIII

In the Cabaña fortress.—My fellow prisoners.—I am liberated.—The *reconcentrados*.—Famine.—I visit an insurgent camp.—A village of starving people.—Peace.—A threatened *Pronunciamento*.—The German American.—Further wars and travels.

THE next morning an officer with a few soldiers marched me for some miles to the nearest railway station and escorted me to Havana. My fellow passengers in the train regarded me with some interest, for I still wore nothing but trousers and jersey and a pair of shoes supplied by my captors ; I was unshaven, coffee-coloured from exposure, and was bleeding from hands, face and feet as the result of my struggles among the rocks when landing ; so I must have presented a very disreputable appearance. We reached Havana in the evening. There was an ominous cry of " *Espia* " as we traversed the crowded station, but my escort quickly drove me in a cab through the streets to the gates of the Capitania. From the Capitania I was carried in a launch across the broad harbour to the gloomy old stone fortress of the Cabaña, where I was taken to a room and examined by some officers. I told my story and heard one officer whisper to another, " I think this man is telling the truth." In the meanwhile, until enquiries could be made, the order was given to place me in a cell in the Cabaña. I was conducted to a flagged alley with a row of large stone cells extending along one side of it. The cells were fronted by an iron grating and had much the appearance of the wild beast cages at the Zoo. The gate of one of the cells was opened and I was placed inside.

Here I found myself with five fellow prisoners, officers in the Spanish Army who, as the senior captain afterwards informed me, were confined there for " minor breaches of discipline." These gentlemen regarded my disreputable self with some consternation, and came to the conclusion that I must be a captured Yankee spy. I held my tongue while they indignantly debated the situation. At last the captain took paper and pen and

indited a letter of protest to General Gomez Ruberte, the Commandant of the fortress. He read the letter aloud to his fellow prisoners. The letter exactly represented their sentiments, and they clapped their hands in approval. It explained that they were Spanish *caballeros*, officers of the King, and patriots, temporarily incarcerated for the commission of minor breaches of discipline, who protested against the indignity of having a Yankee spy as their fellow prisoner in their cell. They then hailed the gaoler, a paunchy, thick-necked, jolly individual who was exactly like Sancho Panza as he appears in the illustrations to " Don Quixote," and he took the letter to the General. Very soon there came to the bars of the cell a smart-looking officer, one of the General's adjutants. He said :

" Gentlemen, you are labouring under a misunderstanding. This man has been wrecked on our coast. He says that he is the correspondent of an English paper who has come here with the permission of our Government. We think that his tale is true. He is in the Cabaña while we make enquiries concerning him. In the meanwhile you should treat him with every consideration."

When the adjutant had gone, the captain, very courteously, but in a loud voice, as is often the way of one talking to a foreigner who does not understand one's language, addressed me and assured me that everything such as it was in the cell, was at my disposition. I replied to him in Spanish with equal courtesy, thanking him.

" What ! you understand Spanish ! " he exclaimed.

Then he apologized profusely in the name of all his comrades for their previous discussion of me and their unfounded suspicion of me. I assured them that their mistake was quite a natural one. After this interchange of courtesies, now that my throat was much better and I was getting very hungry, for I had eaten nothing for two days, I asked him if they had anything to eat. They regretted that they had devoured all their scanty rations, and that no more food would be given to them until the morrow, but they produced for me a thimbleful of white rum which I drank gratefully.

" Can the gaoler in any way get food for us ? " I asked.

" Yes, certainly," was the reply. " From the canteen, but he will want the money, and we have none."

No more had I, but I suggested that we should call for the gaoler. So they hailed him noisily, and soon Sancho, holding his bunch of keys was standing before the bars of our cell.

I explained to him that I wanted food, that I had lost all my money, but that on the morrow I should be in possession of all I needed. Would he give me credit ?

He looked at me and said, " Yes ; " so I suppose that to him I had an honest appearance. Food was getting scarce in Havana owing to Sampson's close blockade, and the operations of the insurgent bands outside the town, and I could see that my fellow prisoners were not over well fed. So I said to the captain :

" Will you and your brother officers do me the honour of supping with me ? "

They were delighted to do so. Sancho was sent off to the canteen and I gave him carte blanche to bring back all the luxuries of the season. Sancho shortly returned with quite a sumptuous feast—two loaves of bread, a sufficiency of cold sausages, two bottles of rich Spanish wine, a bottle of white rum, and a box of cigars. The satisfaction depicted on the faces of my friends when they saw all these good things spread out before them was pleasant to see. We ate our fill, pledged ourselves in brimming bumpers, drank the health of our respective sovereigns, and felt very comfortable. My fellow prisoners made long speeches and sang patriotic songs with rousing choruses, and we were all having a very good time of it when the General's adjutant appeared smiling in front of the grating.

" Gentlemen, gentlemen ! " he said. " You know that this is against all the rules of the prison. I have been sent to ask you now to all go quietly to bed."

So we retired, a blanket being found for me, and I fell into a refreshing sleep, and when I woke in the morning a thrill of delight ran through me as I realized that after much striving I had got into Havana at last. The next day General Gomez Ruberte and some of his officers came to see me. The General had the hearty

frank manner of the Castilian gentleman. He assured me that he quite believed my story, as did everyone else. He was sorry that I should have to be detained in the Cabaña until proof of my statement had come from Madrid; but the cable between Cuba and Spain had been cut, so there might be some delay. One of the officers gave me a letter from the Consul-General enclosing some money.

I now sent to Havana for necessary clothes. A tailor came to measure me for a suit through my prison bars, and a barber also contrived to shave me through the same dividing grating; for, as is usual in prisons, I was not allowed to have a razor in my possession. Then my clothes arrived from the town, and I was once more presentable. The adjutant who had visited me before, now came and told me that I could leave my cell as I was to live and mess with the General's adjutants. I found them a very pleasant lot of fellows, with whom I got on well. I was also given the liberty of the Cabaña and could roam along the line of strong fortifications that extends for a mile along the sea-coast as far as the Morro fort. I was invited to evening parties at the house of the General, where I met his pretty daughter and other ladies of Havana, and listened to delicious music. Indeed, I was a prisoner only in name. Within the Cabaña were pleasant gardens and broad walks and long lines of breezy ramparts crowning the cliffs, commanding fine views over the city and bay. Our Consul-General, Sir Alexander Gollan, did all he could on my behalf. The authorities, after making full enquiry, were satisfied that my statements were true, and at last, on June 1, I obtained my liberty, and was given permission to remain in Cuba during the war. The Spanish Government now issued an order that no other foreign newspaper correspondent would be allowed to land in Cuba, and especially warned anyone against employing my methods of going there.

The most interesting of my experiences in Cuba was certainly the manner of my getting there, but having got there I was allowed to stay. I made the Hotel de Paris my headquarters and awaited the expected bombardment and siege. It was taken for granted in Havana

that the Americans would attack it. It was hoped that they would do so and *que vengan* was the scornful cry of the patriotic inhabitants, for Havana was very strongly fortified and garrisoned by quite one hundred thousand picked Spanish troops, not including the volunteer guerillas. It would have been a very hard nut to crack for the enemy.

All communication with the rest of the island was cut off; on land by the insurgents, who held the interior, and at sea by the ships of the American blockade. Railway communication was, of course, interrupted, save to places near Havana, and even trains running to these were often bombed or fired upon by parties of rebels. So far as the poor were concerned, the city was in a semi-starving condition, and even in the hotel one did not always get bread and used baked plantains as a substitute. There was a good deal of sickness in the town at the time, and some yellow fever.

But though there was a lack of food there was an abundance of cigars. The year's output of these could not be exported on account of the blockade and they would have been spoilt had they remained here during the rainy season. So cigars were very cheap in the shops, and Upmann's, of cigar fame, who were my bankers, used to fill my pockets with their choicest cigars from the *Vuelta Abajo* whenever I went to their office to cash a draft on *The Times*. They were green Havanas, fit for kings, which only the richest of the new rich could afford to buy now, and these would not appreciate them.

The weeks and months passed by. We always saw the blockading vessels on the horizon, but still there was no attack. Once or twice some ships got near enough to shell the fortifications at long range. The Spanish heavy guns returned the fire, but little damage was done. We occasionally received news of the outside world from the neutral gunboats, British, French and German, that used to come into Havana. They did not bring encouraging news. The Americans, rightly, were too wise to attack Havana at the cost of great loss of life, when their ends could be served by other methods. At last we heard that the American objective was Santiago at the other end of the island, five hundred miles away, where

the Spanish force was inconsiderable, and whither it was impossible to send reinforcements from Havana by land or sea. Next we heard that Cerera's fleet lying in Santiago was ordered to proceed at once to Havana. The Spanish ships very insufficiently supplied with ammunition and coal came out. It was an heroic suicide, for as they crawled along the coast they were either sunk at long range by the American men-of-war, or were run ashore in a sinking condition.

It was difficult to realize that one was in a blockaded city. Everything went on much as usual. The ladies took their drives and walks as of old in the Pardo ; the cafés were well frequented ; the theatres were crowded nightly. The most noticeable sign of the situation was the obscurity of Havana by night. The supply of coal had to be economized ; the greater number, therefore, of the gas and electric lamps were now not lit ; the best streets were ill-lighted, and the smaller thoroughfares were left in complete darkness. Blockade runners frequently succeeded in landing provisions in the vicinity of Havana, but despite this the dearth of provisions was making itself felt. The poor, of course, were the first to suffer. To these the Government issued a certain allowance of food, and their distress was also relieved by private charity. I visited the quarter of the town to which the *reconcentrados* had fled for refuge. Their condition was indeed pitiable ; these innocent victims of the long civil war were to be seen sitting and lying quietly in the streets and open places as if patiently awaiting death. And many of them did thus die in the thoroughfares in the sight of passers-by. During my walk through the quarter I saw two propped up against a wall dead, their mouths tied up with cloths, awaiting the cart that should carry them off to burial. The *reconcentrados* drew rations from the Government, and were not dying of sheer starvation. For months these people had suffered great privations ; before arriving here they had lived on insufficient and unwholesome food in the jungle. The mortality among the *reconcentrados* was very high, but they had become so debilitated that they were unable to withstand this unhealthy climate ; in nine cases out of ten, malarial fever was the cause of death.

But the facts were horrible enough without any exaggeration. Suffice it to say that even in Havana, where the conditions were far better than in other towns, there were during the blockade thirty deaths to every birth among the white population, the mortality being at the rate of forty-five per cent. per annum. So devastated by the civil war was the countryside outside Havana that there were towns in which more than one-half of the population had perished of starvation in a few months, and in Havana itself it is certain that the bulk of the inhabitants would have been unable to support existence had it not been that mangoes, pine-apples and bananas were plentiful that year. Thousands in the city were supporting life on these fruits alone, a diet which in this climate was said to be productive of fever and other diseases.

In Havana, the people, suffering and half starved, awaited against hope the Spanish squadron which they had expected daily for weeks to appear off the harbour, to raise the blockade, and permit the much-needed supplies to be poured into the city, and so avert the famine with its accompanying horrors of plague ; for it seemed probable that provisions would be exhausted before the maize and other crops were ready for the harvest in the cultivated zone round the city. During the first weeks of the blockade the Havana lighthouse gave no light at night, as it was deemed advisable not to allow the enemy a mark in the darkness ; but now—a pathetic sign of the still flickering hope—it once more nightly threw its rays over the waters, that it might guide into the harbour the squadron that never came. One half of the Spanish Atlantic fleet, as we now know, had been destroyed while coming out of Santiago harbour, but the other half, or which we had been waiting so long, and eagerly—where was it ?

At last the news leaked out that the vessels of the second squadron, which we had been expecting, had sailed for the Philippines, and not for Cuba, and that the third squadron was still fitting out in Spain. The news caused consternation in the city and people began to realize that the end was near. The troops too, of the regular army, who for a long time had received no pay,

and scant rations, but had been quite content, were eating out their hearts with a helpless dull rage because they could not get at that foe—so near, even in sight, but unattainable—and try conclusions with him.

Some officers advocated the dispatching of a force to Santiago to relieve the garrison there, but wiser men knew that such a course would be disastrous, for an expedition to march five hundred miles through the Cuban bush in the rainy and most unhealthy season of the year, all the way harassed by the hordes of black insurgents, inured to the climate, would be an impossible undertaking ; so the little garrison at Santiago had to be left to its fate.

Towards the end of the war there was a sort of informal truce between the Spanish and the insurgents. A friend and myself took advantage of this to visit one of the insurgent camps, which was a few leagues outside Havana. At four o'clock in the morning, before the city was awake, we drove through the deserted streets in a carriage, and got out into the open country. My instructions were to follow the high road running due south from Havana, and at a certain spot fifteen miles from the city to await the arrival of some insurgent soldiers who would be sent to escort me to the camp. All the country through which we passed was ruined. The sugar had been neglected for years, and the rank jungle was choking up such canes as were left. The houses that we passed were roofless, the factories and the handsome *quintas* of the once-rich planters were completely gutted. Only the avenues of stately palms by which each deserted mansion was approached had escaped destruction.

But it was a beautiful country. Everywhere the rich red soil was covered with a luxuriant and vividly green vegetation, studded with the graceful cabbage palms which towered high above the lesser growth. We wound among hills clothed with forest and crossed prolific plains, now wastes of long grass and tangled jungle. It was a rich and lovely, but now wholly uncultivated, and almost uninhabited country. We passed through the little township of San Francisco de Paula, almost in ruins. Here we found stationed a considerable force of Spanish troops, but we saw few inhabitants, and these were for

the most part *reconcentrados*, in a most miserable condition, white people ill-clad and often naked, of livid complexion, some horrible to look at with their skeleton arms and legs and hugely distended stomachs, characteristic of those who live on very innutritious food—and these people had long supported life by eating the bark of trees. These wretched people were a little remnant of some thousands who had perished of famine and fever. We had brought a quantity of provisions with us to distribute among them, and they were greedily devoured.

We drove on ; post after post we passed, and though the soldiers stared at us with evident wonder, and seemed doubtful as to whether they should summon us to halt, we were not once challenged. At last the fifteen miles' drive was over, and we reached the spot where I had to await my escort, near the deserted township of Somorostro, and within a few hundred yards of the last Spanish blockhouse and post. I stopped the carriage and shortly from out of the jungle there cantered into the road three mounted and armed insurgents, one leading two horses which the General had sent for us.

The men were sturdy mulattoes, clad in the rough white canvas rebel uniform, worn and ragged ; but their accoutrements were in good condition, their carbines were clean and they presented a soldierly appearance. We mounted our horses and rode by narrow tracks through the bush for about half an hour, passed the insurgent outposts, and reached the rebel camp and the headquarters of General Jose Maria Rodriguez, who was in command of the insurgent forces in Western Cuba, numbering ten thousand men armed with rifles, and five thousand having cutlasses (*machetes*) only.

He was occupying a substantial country house, the property of a Spanish planter, standing in the centre of a clearing which was surrounded by a strong stockade. In front of the house was a broad lake, backed by wooded hills. Here I was most courteously and hospitably received by General Rodriguez, and about a dozen officers of rank. These were all Cuban gentlemen of good education, speaking French or English or both. I was much struck by the intelligence of their conversation, their military bearing, their evident zeal, and the

excellent discipline they maintained. That they had led their men through plenty of severe fighting was shown by the honourable scars which they nearly all bore. One of the officers had been wounded nine times, and General Rodriguez himself walked with great difficulty, having been shot through both legs.

After lunch we rode to the neighbouring camp where a regiment of cavalry and one of infantry, about one thousand two hundred men in all, were bivouacked. They were paraded before us and I noticed that nine out of ten of the rank and file and most of the non-commissioned officers were coloured men, a scoundrelly looking lot, but their physique was good, and they had a soldierly bearing. It was evident that they had been well drilled and that a strict discipline was enforced. Their rifles and side arms were kept in much better order than those of the Spanish troops. After years of fighting in the jungle, hunting and hunted, their clothing was reduced to rags ; many were naked to the waist ; some had little more than a loin cloth ; while some, the General informed me, had been unable to come to parade as they had returned from a campaign in the interior, absolutely naked, having their rifles and bandoliers only. The wiry little Cuban horses on which the cavalrymen were mounted were in good condition.

The few white men in the ranks had a very different appearance to the blacks. As ragged and naked as their coloured comrades, they were in a deplorable condition, emaciated and pallid, shaking with fever, while several had the shrunken limbs and swollen stomachs I had observed among the white *reconcentrados*, resulting from a diet of wild fruits unsuited to the digestive organs of a European. Not a tithe of the white men who served with the rebels in the bush survived the ordeal. I bade farewell to General Rodriguez and his officers and was driven back to Havana.

Shortly after this journey, the news came to Havana that peace had been concluded, and that Spain was to lose her great West Indian island, the chief jewel of the Spanish crown. There was great indignation in the city. Rather than surrender Havana without striking a blow, several of the Generals advocated a *Pronunciamento*, an

ignoring of the peace terms, and a resistance to the end of the Havana garrison. But the General who was the principal advocate of this scheme died in a fit of apoplexy, and happily more sober counsels prevailed, and the idea was abandoned.

The Americans then crowded into Havana, and soon one heard almost as much American as Spanish spoken in the streets. I took an American steamer to New York and put up at the Gerard House Hotel. There were in the hotel a number of German Americans, and I had never before heard so much hefty boasting as was indulged in by these hyphenated folk. Said one of these to me :

" Well, I guess that our naval action at Santiago will rank with Trafalgar as the greatest naval victory of the nineteenth century."

I was having a cocktail before dinner at the long bar in the Gerard House, when a smartly-dressed, fat man addressed me :

" I hear, sir, that you have come from Cuba."

" I have," I replied.

I looked at him and noticed that he had the German square head. He also talked American with a strong German accent. He had evidently been born in the Fatherland, and had only been a few years in the States. The following conversation between us ensued :

" Well, sir, did you see our brave Yankee boys fight ? Don't you think our troops are the finest in the world ? "

I replied that I had not seen enough of the armies of the world to warrant my making comparisons between them.

" Well, you British were reckoned the finest troops in Europe in the old days, and we licked you, so we ought to be the finest troops in the world."

" I have no recollection of your ever having licked us."

" Say, you don't remember our licking you ! What about our War of Independence ? "

" I did not know that you ever had a War of Independence."

By this time the Americans at the bar had pricked up their ears and were listening to our conversation with some amusement.

"What! don't they teach you history at British schools?" he said, rather offensively. "Did you never hear about Washington and our victory at Bunker Hill?"

"Oh," I said, "I see that you are talking about the American War of Independence, but you said *our troops*, and I gather from your speech that you are a German. You German people never had a War of Independence. During the American War of Independence you fought on the British side. We hired your troops from your various tyrant princes to fight for us in America, and from all accounts you fought damned badly."

The hyphenated one turned very red and walked out.

This book of reminiscences has grown to a great length and I must now bring it to a close. Twenty-five years have elapsed since I went to Cuba, and many things have happened since then. On my return to London I was sent off to Spain to accompany the Government troops to a Carlist war that never took place. Then, as correspondent of *The Morning Post*, I was present at the six weeks' Dreyfus trial in Rennes. Next in 1899, having joined the staff of *The Morning Post* I went to the Boer War and lost my right arm at the battle of Belmont.

There were no more wars for a time, so for some years I undertook a lot of interesting general journalism for *The Morning Post*. I went to Madrid to describe both the coronation and the marriage of the King of Spain, and I attended all the autumn manœuvres of our troops and the Naval and Military tournaments, at both of which I always met old comrades. I accompanied the *Ophir* tour round the world of our present King and Queen, when Duke and Duchess of York; I was sent to South Africa to trek all over the country and describe the settlement after the war, and visited the Victoria Falls.

Then war broke out between Russia and Japan, and I accompanied General Kuroki and the first Japanese Army in the Manchurian campaign and was present at battles that were on a much bigger scale than I had ever seen before. But the new methods of treating correspondents when accompanying an army in the field had come in, and we enjoyed very little liberty. I was sent to the Balkans shortly after the Turkish revolution when trouble was brewing, saw a good deal of the "Young

Turks," and at Salonika there was imparted to me much of the secret history of the movement, and the curious way in which a spurious freemasonry was employed by the conspirators. Then came the Great War in which alas, I was allowed to take no part; but, by way of consolation, I was sent to Ireland to write about rebels and their foul doings.

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Printed by Taylor Garnett Evans & Co., Manchester.

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